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ABSTRACT

Designed to serve as a framework in which high school debate students, coaches, and judges can evaluate the issues, arguments, and evidence concerning which agricultural policies best serve the United States, this booklet provides guidelines for research on the 1986-87 debate resolutions selected by the National Federation of State High School Associations. Following the presentation of the problem area and the three debate resolutions, the booklet's four chapters discuss (1) getting started, a review of useful information on researching the topic of agricultural policy; (2) an overview of the general problems of agriculture; (3) farmers' income and food exports and (4) issues of a comprehensive federal policy. Graphs and tables accompany the text. (HTH)

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ERIC FIRST ANALYSIS: Agricultural Policy

1986–87 National High School Debate Resolutions

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Foreword

ERIC First Analysis, published annually since 1973, provides debaters with guidelines for research on the debate resolutions selected by state and national forensic associations in a referendum held by the National Federation of State High School Associations. It incorporates an instructional approach designed to avoid "structured" cases and "canned" evidence. Periodic surveys of teachers of debate have indicated that the *ERIC First Analysis* has proved to be an excellent resource for students to begin their study of issues and arguments.

The *ERIC First Analysis* of the 1986–87 National High School Debate Resolutions is published by the Speech Communication Association in cooperation with the Educational Resources Information Center Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills (ERIC/RCS). The ERIC/RCS Clearinghouse is supported by the Office of Educational Research and Information which has as one of its missions the dissemination of knowledge to improve classroom practices. This ERIC information analysis paper is unique in that it is intended for direct use by high school students as well as by their teachers.

To be a "first" analysis, the manuscript must be prepared in a period of eight weeks after the February announcement of the national debate topic. The authors' thorough analysis of issues and sources in so short a time and their adaptation of the analysis to the needs of high school debaters are tributes to their experience and excellence as forensics educators.

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1986–87 High School Debate Problem Area and Resolutions

United States Agricultural Policy

What agricultural policy would best serve the economic interests of the United States?

Debate Resolutions

Resolved: That the federal government should adopt an export program to significantly expand foreign markets for United States agricultural products.

Resolved: That the federal government should guarantee an annual cash income to farmers in the United States.

Resolved: That the federal government should implement a comprehensive long-term agricultural policy in the United States.

Preface

The purpose of this publication is to provide a brief overview of the 1986–87 high school debate resolutions. The decision-making process for selecting the problem area and resolutions is different from the system used for determining the college debate topic. Last December the National Federation offered three problem areas and nine resolutions for consideration. After six weeks of balloting by the various state and national forensic representatives, the topic area of the United States agriculture policy won the referendum. The final resolution, however, will not be determined until December, although an early preference has been shown for the comprehensive policy topic. All of the specific resolutions are related to each other, and numerous case areas are interchangeable.

Which ever resolution is finally selected, the debater will have a tremendous amount of research material to assimilate. The four chapters of this book are intended to prepare debaters for their own efficient investigation of the problem area. The four chapters are: (1) getting started, a review of useful information on researching the topic of agricultural policy; (2) an overview of the general problems of agriculture; (3) farmers' income and food exports; (4) issues of a comprehensive federal policy.

Since this text was written early in the debate year, it cannot encompass all possible positions that could be developed under any of the resolutions. This publication should be used to establish early research priorities on the most likely affirmative and negative arguments. Also, it provides a general overview of the kinds of issues likely to be discussed under a topic devoted to exploring various aspects of United States agricultural policy.

The opinions expressed in this work do not represent the official position of the Speech Communication Association. In most instances, the consensus view of debate theory is presented, which may not represent the personal view of the authors. As a general rule, this text emphasizes the practical rather than the exotic, the likely rather than the unlikely.

This is the second year that this work is coauthored. All of the planning, research, and writing for this publication was done by the

authors. Editing and proofreading assistance was gratefully accepted from Christine Risley Wagner.

The task of compiling the material and finishing the manuscript under rigorous time constraints has been made easier by the patience and understanding of both of our families and the staff, students, and faculty of the School of Arts and Sciences of California State University, Sacramento. The information in this publication is intended to benefit debaters and coaches, and to introduce an exciting topic of current interest to audiences and judges alike.

David L. Wagner

Douglas Fraleigh

1. Getting Started

The Beginning

One of the reasons that a debate topic on agricultural policy should be particularly appealing to high school debaters is the timeliness of the issues under discussion. Newspapers and current events magazines provide a seemingly endless series of articles on the plight of the American farmer. A tremendous range of policy choices face decisionmakers seeking solutions to the problems confronting United States agriculture.

This wealth of current information compounds the already difficult task facing any debater concerned with properly instituting research on a new debate resolution. Since the general area of agriculture is almost too broad to be a manageable research assignment, a plan should be devised to narrow the focus of individual library work. Similarly, a method should be employed that would increase the likelihood that more important topics will receive priority attention. Operating on the generally recognized principle that group efforts are superior to the sum total of individual efforts, this publication encourages the "brainstorming" technique often used by business or academic groups to generate ideas. Such an approach adapts easily to the needs of debate squads. Coaches and debaters should discuss possible case areas and issues likely to emerge on the agriculture policy topics. This exchange should encourage all members of the group to volunteer information or contribute their ideas. The rules are easy to establish:

1. Ideas are to be expressed freely, without taking turns or waiting for permission to speak.
2. No member is allowed to criticize anything another member says, either positively or negatively. Ideas are simply to be presented without evaluation by anyone else.
3. All ideas are encouraged; the wilder and more bizarre they are the better.
4. As many ideas as possible should be generated. Sufficient quantity will ultimately result in quality.[1]

A list of the ideas generated by this process should be kept for use in arranging research or case development concepts, potential disadvantages, and topicality arguments.

These brainstorming sessions do not have to be totally unstructured. The quality of the exchange would be enhanced if some general publications on farm policy were read before the meeting. Current articles on farm foreclosures, federal subsidies, and the federal government's credit programs would help to raise the level of knowledge of most debaters. Another preliminary step is to review other debate topics for similarities to this year's resolution. For example, last year's water quality resolution led to research on such issues as: federalism, federal water policy, irrigation, pesticide regulation and use, pollution control, and conservation measures. Many of the arguments raised under these resolutions continue to be relevant to analysis of the current problem areas.

Research Procedures

Once a list of concepts has been established, it becomes necessary to organize research assignments. A number of questions must be considered when making such assignments. Is it important to research an affirmative case first? What areas can be covered with the sources readily available? What cases are likely to be run early in the year? Answers to questions like these will determine which ideas must be considered primary research objectives.

After a preliminary list of topics has been developed, the most systematic method of researching is to compile brief bibliographies on each of the major issues or case areas. Although some debaters are good at chasing down obscure footnotes in books or intuitively finding useful publications, the best and most comprehensive method is to consult the library card catalog for books and indexes for periodicals or journals. Agricultural issues provide a unique opportunity to utilize a wide variety of library resources. Debaters will consult material from such diverse academic areas as political science, chemistry, business, economics, law, environmental studies, and biology.

The card catalog is the main source for locating books in the library. This catalog is indexed under subject, author, and book title. Special reference sources essentially devoted to government publications are particularly helpful since the Department of Agriculture has sponsored so many publications.

There is assistance available in most libraries to help users find appropriate material. First, most libraries have trained reference librarians who will give assistance if requested. Second, various books explain reference sources in greater detail. Some good examples are the *New York Times Guide to Reference Materials*,[2] *Government Publications and Their Use*,[3] and *Guide to Reference Books*.[4] A third option is having

a research service compile a bibliography on selected topics. A fee is charged by many libraries or research organizations for computer retrieval of this information. This type of data base search is becoming increasingly available at affordable prices.

Indexes and Abstracts

Most indexes or abstracts are organized alphabetically by subject or topic and by author. While an index supplies basic information on when and where an article was published, an abstract offers the added attraction of providing a short summary of the publication. Typical subject headings on these resolutions would include farm policy, agriculture, subsidies, price supports, farm credit, produce, food aid, and farm exports. *The Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* is perhaps the most widely available resource index in the United States. Available in most public school libraries, this research aid surveys over 150 popular magazines covering issues of current news value. The monthly issues should be reviewed each month during the debate season. Government documents will be extremely valuable resources for this year's topic and can be found in several sources, including the *Monthly Catalog of U.S. Government Publications* and the *GPO Sales Publications Reference File*.

Nationally distributed newspapers also provide indexes to their publications. The *New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Christian Science Monitor, Washington Post,* and *Wall Street Journal* are all respected papers with indexing systems available in many libraries. While most local newspapers will not have published indexes available, some libraries will clip and file articles on important topics. Also, *NewsBank* collects articles from local papers and places them on microfiche. Other special indexes should prove useful for a careful consideration of agricultural policy. Among them are:

Business Periodicals Index
Indexes a wide range of magazines and journals of interest to those in business.

Health Aspects of Pesticides Abstract Bulletin
Seeks to foster current awareness of the major worldwide literature pertaining to the effects of pesticides on humans. Indexes 500 domestic and foreign journals. Published monthly by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Index to Legal Periodicals
Indexes American legal periodicals. Contains book reviews and case indexes. Printed numerous times during the year.

Public Affairs Information Service Bulletin
Reviews over 1,000 government and business publications and government documents. Presents a brief abstract of relevant articles.

Selected References on Environmental Quality as It Relates to Health
Indexes 2,300 biomedical periodicals. Includes pollution, pesticides, drugs, ecology, and the environment. Published monthly by the National Library of Medicine.

Sources

The preferred method for systematic research on any topic is extensive use of indexes of abstracts. However, a time lag exists between the publication date for journals or periodicals and their inclusion in various indexing systems. While it is unlikely that farm problems will be solved in a month, it is important that each debater keeps current with shifts in the actions of the Congress, the president, and the state governments. The best single recommendation is a thorough reading of a good daily newspaper. In addition, popular news weeklies such as *Newsweek*, *Time* or *U.S. News and World Report* should be examined periodically for timely articles on major issues.

A number of magazines should be reviewed each month for articles on agricultural policy. This list would include:

Agricultural Outlook
Barron's
Business Week
Environment
EPA Journal
Farm Journal
Federal Reserve Board: Kansas City
Fortune

Other publications may be more familiar to the debater and are important sources of evidence. These publications include the *Congressional Record*, which is the official account of the activities of Congress, and *Current History*, which devotes several summer issues to articles on the high school topic. *Editorial Research Reports* and *The Congressional Digest* publish lengthier articles on other topics of current interest. An invaluable source of information on contemporary issues before the House or Senate is the *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*.

Investigating this topic will expose the student to a wide range of official state and federal documents related to farm issues. Figure 1 provides a graphic representation of the research process described in this chapter.

Primary Data

A wealth of information from primary resources exists for this topic area. In the legal area, the debater can examine relevant court cases, statutes, and administrative regulations. Several general statistical sources provide information for a quick overview. Such publications include the *Statistical Abstract of the United States,* the *American Statistic Index,* and the *Statistical Reference Index.* In addition, various government agencies compile their own statistical reports on a regular basis. Among the more pertinent reports on this topic are those published by the Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Federal Reserve Board.

Evidence Transcription

The final result of this research effort is the gathering of usable evidence to support arguments on issues raised during a debate. This evidence should meet commonly agreed upon standards for debate evidence. Among those tests of evidence mentioned by authors of argumentation textbooks are: (1) expertise of the author; (2) unbiased reporting of information; (3) timely information; and (4) verifiable sources of data.

In addition, "full source citation" should be available for each unit of evidence used in a debate. Coaches involved with both high school and college debate are increasingly concerned about the challenges to information used during debate rounds. Contestants are responsible for knowing and following the rules and regulations required by their leagues, state associations, and the National Forensic League on source citations and challenges to evidence. Debaters are held accountable for the evidence they use.

Some debaters carry copies of important affirmative and negative sources to answer immediately requests for clarification. A caution sounded in a prior *ERIC First Analysis* deserves repeating: "Particular problems often arise when evidence is paraphrased or when seemingly irrelevant information is edited out. As a general practice, this type of editing should be avoided."[5] An example of a file card that contains a full citation is provided in Figure 2.

The research process outlined here must continue throughout the year. Any topic will undergo substantial changes as the school year

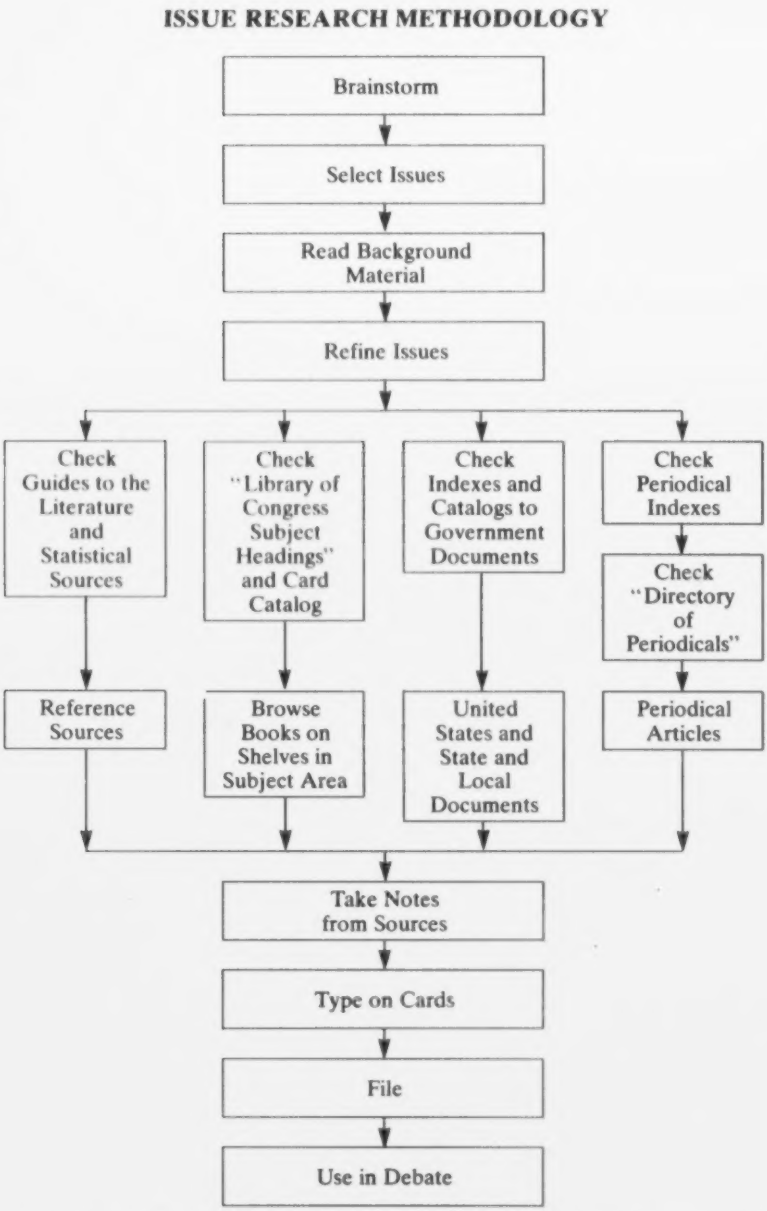


Figure 1. From: Kristie and Kong. *General Business Research: Selected Sources*, California State University—Sacramento Library.

SAMPLE CARD

(1) P4

(2) Indirect Benefits

(3) Gee Wilson; (4) Economic Analyst, Federal Reserve Bank, Atlanta; (5) *Economic Review; FRB, Atlanta*, (6) August, 1985; (7) p. 33.

(8) A United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) study estimated that indirect benefits of the 1982 farm program were four times the direct benefits.

(9) DW 972

Figure 2. The numbers prefacing various parts of the sample card refer to the following: (1) code number of section for refiling, (2) brief synopsis of the content of the evidence, (3) author of the quotation, (4) author's qualifications, (5) source, (6) date of publication, (7) page, (8) one central concept of evidence, (9) initials of student researcher and consecutive number of total evidence cards researched by this debater.

progresses. Professor Henderson's warning from the *1979–80 ERIC First Analysis* on a prior high school topic is still a valid observation:

> Those of you beginning to debate the new topic will want to broaden your reading, consider the implications of this first analysis, and discuss the potential implications with others. A debater should never rely on a narrow base of information, whether it be a compilation of viewpoints similar to *First Analysis*, a single news source such as a news magazine, a debate quote handbook, or the coach of a debate squad. Instead, the debater must broaden her or his understanding of the political context within which the subject is being debated, and then exhibit that understanding to the reasonable, prudent, thinking individual who serves as judge for the debate.[6]

If the following chapters establish the framework for formulating a systematic consideration of this topic, our purpose has been accomplished.

2. The Problem Area: United States Agricultural Policy

What agricultural policy would best serve the economic interests of the United States?

Overview

The basic issues presented in a discussion of agricultural policy in the United States tend to be clouded by the almost mythical image ascribed to the American farmer. Movies such as *Places in the Heart, Country* and *The River* portray the struggle of the small family farmer against nature and commercial interests. Rural communities are still viewed as the true guardians of American values and custodians of Jeffersonian democracy. Journalist James Krohe, Jr. notes: "Urban or not, the country remains rooted spiritually to the land. That historical impulse to landedness is ever more remote from its origins, surviving physically in the near-universal yearning for a house in the suburbs with a backyard and pets—the homestead of old, updated with indoor plumbing and cable TV."[1]

"The heartland of America is bleeding," claims Aloysius Ehrbar in *Fortune* as he details the magnitude of the personal tragedy of the current farm crisis:

> Nearly 100,000 U.S. farmers, many of them among the most efficient in the world, are about to go broke. Many are in their 30s and 40s, men who just a few years ago saw rich, prosperous lives ahead. Now confidence and pride have been replaced by defeat and soul-destroying self-doubt. The lucky ones will be left with a few of their acres or will rent their farms back from lenders who foreclosed. The rest will try to build new lives off the farm.[2]

While individual responses to this loss of a way of life vary, there has been a measurable increase in stress levels and maladaptive coping behavior. Manifestations of severe depression, anger, and violence are some of the effects. Psychologist Val Farmer explains:

> . . . Considering the number of farmers devastated by the current economic crisis, we have seen very little assault and homicide.

> Depression and suicide, on the contrary, are serious problems; suicide rates have increased steadily among farmers since 1982, according to statistical evidence from Missouri and anecdotal evidence from other farming states. University of Missouri sociologists William and Judith Heffernan, in a study of forty families from a north central Missouri county who had left farming for financial reasons between 1980 and 1985, found that nearly 100 percent were depressed at the time they left farming. Even several years away from farming, 50 percent of the men and 72 percent of the women were still depressed.[3]

Such individual problems reach out and have an impact on the entire community. Drawing on his experiences as a banker during the lumber crisis in the Northwest during the early 1980s, Ronald Culbertson concludes: "Probably the toughest price a community pays during bad times is the loss of morale and confidence in the future. Hope succumbs to the erosive power of the constant barrage of bad news. People stop counting their advantages."[4]

While agriculture itself represents only a small percent of the total United States labor force and Gross National Product (GNP), a host of other businesses support the farmer. Frequently referred to as "agribusiness," these industries have a significant impact on the economy. The comparison between a narrow definition of agriculture, which is initially limited to farming, and a broader concept, which includes related processors, transporters, marketers, and suppliers, is provided by the Federal Reserve Board of Kansas City's vice president, Marvin Duncan:

> Agricultural production accounts directly for 2.4 percent of the nation's nominal GNP and employs 2.7 percent of its labor force. When broadly defined to include agribusiness, however, the agricultural sector is far more important, accounting for 20 percent of the nation's nominal GNP and employing 23 percent of its labor force. Thus, the nation's agribusiness sector is not only important for its ability to support production agriculture, but it also is of major importance in its own right.[5]

As financial problems mount for farmers, supporting "industries, such as farm implement dealers and seed and fertilizer stores, are toppling like dominoes, one after another. Foreclosures are becoming commonplace."[6] The *Economic Review* of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City concludes:

> . . . And problems on the farm have spilled over into the rural communities. Most businesses serving agricultural producers, regardless of the region of the country, have experienced reduced sales and downward pressure on profits. Farm financial stress problems have been particularly evident among agricultural lenders.[7]

Not all farmers are in imminent danger of losing their livelihood. Approximately 60 percent of the 2.3 million farmers in the United States

are part-time and rely primarily on nonfarm income for support. The Census Bureau defines a farm as "any unit selling $1,000 or more worth of farm products per year."[8] This definition would include a large number of small-scale agricultural producers. Rex Campbell, professor of rural sociology at University of Missouri–Columbia, notes the number of such operations:

> According to the 1984 Census of Agriculture, 72 percent of farms in the United States are small, defined as less than $40,000 in gross sales of farm products a year. With sales this small, net farm income amounts of only a few thousand dollars a year. Ninety-nine percent of the net household income of small farmers comes from nonfarm sources.[9]

Thus, the current farm crisis has not really hit those who farm part-time or who manage small farms. Nor are large farms in particular trouble. Emanual Melichar, a senior economist at the Federal Reserve Board estimates that aggregate cash profits for farmers before interest expenses were actually higher in 1984 than in the early 1970s. This estimate would indicate that the problem is more of financing farming enterprises than in the direct costs of farm operations. The 25,000 largest U.S. farms (annual sales of over $500,000) represent about 1 percent of all farms, yet receive almost 66 percent of all farm revenue. These giant enterprises are financially healthy with an average return on assets of 18 percent in 1983 and a 24 percent return on equity.[10]

Those areas in deepest trouble are farms that are categorized as middle-sized—family farms with annual sales between $40,000 and $500,000:

> Those hardest hit by the current crisis are the middle-sized, commercial farms in the Midwest run by families who depend on the farm for almost all of their income. The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimated that there were 679,000 farms in this category in 1985, accounting for 31 percent of all farms and selling 51 percent of all farm products.[11]

A report issued by the Office of Technological Assessment (OTA) claims that these farms will fall in absolute number and in proportion of total farms, and will have a smaller share of the market and of farm income. The total number of farms is also projected to decrease. From a high of 6.8 million farms in 1935, there were only 2.2 million in 1984. About one million of these farms may disappear within the next fourteen years. The OTA report said that United States agriculture is entering a new technological era, a time when the character of agriculture is changing rapidly.

If the present trend continues, it is likely that the number of farms will shrink to about 1.25 million in the year 2000 from 2.24 million counted in the government's 1982 agricultural census. "The number of

small and part-time farms will continue to decline, but will still make up about 80 percent of total farms," the OTA report noted. "The large and very large farms will increase substantially in number. Approximately 50,000 of these largest farms will account for 75 percent of the agricultural production by year 2000."[12] This changing picture of United States agriculture is the reason why this year's debate topic is of such current interest to policymakers.

The remainder of this chapter will explore arguments and issues that are shared by all three of the specific debate resolutions under consideration for 1986–87. Initially, some of the reasons behind the current farm crisis will be explained. Next, the role of the federal level of government and of market approaches to dealing with agricultural policies will be considered. Finally, basic information on formulating a plan to use in debate events will be discussed.

Farm Financial Crisis

The financial crisis of the American family farm can be traced to the economic boom experienced by most farmers in the 1970s. An expectation developed that these conditions would continue in the future and planning was based upon these expectations. J. Charles Partee of the Federal Reserve details some of the assumptions:

> "There was, in particular, a general perception that there were limits on the potential world production of agricultural products and that these limits would continue to encourage a rapid growth in farm exports, thus fostering increasing returns to land and to other farm inputs. Many also believed that the more rapid inflation of the decade would persist so that long-term indebtedness could be paid off with less valuable future dollars."[13]

Acting on these expectations, farmers and investors acquired additional farmland at drastically increased prices while also purchasing new equipment and machinery. Much of this expansion was financed with borrowed money. Unfortunately, the bubble burst as the 1980s saw inflation decline, prices and land values fall, and record world harvests. As the publication *Agricultural Outlook* summarized:

> These same factors worked in reverse in the 1980s. Producer returns declined as demand for U.S. products here and abroad weakened, stocks increased, and nominal commodity support levels were eventually frozen. A sharp drop in the inflation rate, combined with high real interest rates reinforced the downward pressure on land values. Declining farm incomes led to cash flow problems for many farm operators, especially those who had used debt to finance purchases of equipment and land at near peak prices.[14]

A number of national economic conditions have contributed to the farm problems. Marvin Duncan cites several:

> The very large federal budget deficits of recent years add significantly to the inflation-adjusted cost of carrying debt and to the value of the U.S. dollar in international exchange markets. Moreover, high real U.S. interest rates hold interest rates higher worldwide than would otherwise be true and also slow world economic growth. The unusually expansive U.S. fiscal policy in the midst of an economic expansion has added to the burden of the nation's monetary authority in developing and implementing macroeconomic policy. The result of high federal budget deficits has been a large U.S. trade deficit and an uneven economic expansion, with some sectors performing very well while more capital-intensive and export-dependent sectors, such as agriculture, lag behind.[15]

Federal tax policy also has encouraged investment in agriculture beyond what market forces would have justified. Tax incentives and tax sheltering of nonfarm income by investment in agriculture have distorted crop and livestock production decisions. As *Agricultural Outlook* noted: "The current tax system has encouraged the growth and expansion of existing farm businesses and has attracted tax-motivated investments into the sector. This has distorted relative input and commodity prices."[16] There are also certain specific reasons for the crisis in agriculture.

Farm Productivity

It seems paradoxical that over the past fifty years as the number of farms has declined, total farm output has increased. The explanation is that greater productivity allows the average farmer to produce more for each unit in production. Agriculture has experienced a growth rate of about 1.5 percent a year. This rate is projected to continue for the future.

> While many analysts in the 1970s believed that agricultural productivity growth might slow, recent developments in biotechnology point toward higher, rather than lower, future rates of productivity growth. Thus, the United States will be able to meet its domestic food needs with a steadily declining amount of productive capacity.[17]

The effect was summarized by the Congressional Research Service in 1985: "Agriculture has become a victim of its own success—the advances in science and management that have been boosting the rate of output have also caused wrenching structural changes in the farm sector. In short, fewer farmers are needed to feed the nation's population and serve overseas customers."[18]

Land Values

The value of farmland, especially in the Midwest, has resembled a rollercoaster ride with peaks and valleys. As expectations for expanding

markets were heightened in the 1970s, farmers began to acquire additional land for production. Other factors that tended to push farmers to purchase more land are explained by Gene Wilson and Gene Sullivan of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta:

> High commodity prices at the opening of that decade increased farm income, providing both the incentive and the financial means for farm expansion. In addition, low and sometimes negative real interest rates encouraged farmers to undertake debt. Furthermore, as advances in farm technology continued to make larger farms more economically efficient, they spurred expansion of existing farms. All these factors led to a substantial jump in agricultural demand for farmland.[19]

This demand was further enhanced by land developers and speculators, Wilson and Sullivan continue:

> Coincidental with the mushrooming demand for acreage within the farm sector, non-agricultural demand also climbed markedly. Speculative demand arose from both the farm and non-farm sectors when annual rates of increase in farmland prices began to soar well above nominal interest rates. Growing acquisitions of farmland for residential or commercial development added to the overall demand (and also gave rise to serious concerns about "disappearing" farmland).
>
> Reflecting the combined influence of these market forces, the national average value of farmland rose by 275 percent between 1970 and 1981.[20]

The value of land increased when the demand exceeded the available supply.

Just as suddenly as land prices increased, various economic factors brought a rapid decline in the value of farm real estate. Among the major reasons were:

- the reduced demand for exports reduced the need for more land in production
- the production costs for fuel, machinery, and interest payments increased the eroding profits
- the expectations of continued high interest rates reduced the attractiveness of borrowing funds
- the 1981 recession reduced developers' plans for acquiring land for new projects
- the speculators lost interest in using farmland as a hedge as inflation became controlled

The percent change in the per acre cost of land during the last five years for each state is given in Figure 3.

Depending on the particular assumptions made concerning commodity prices and economic growth, farmland values will eventually settle

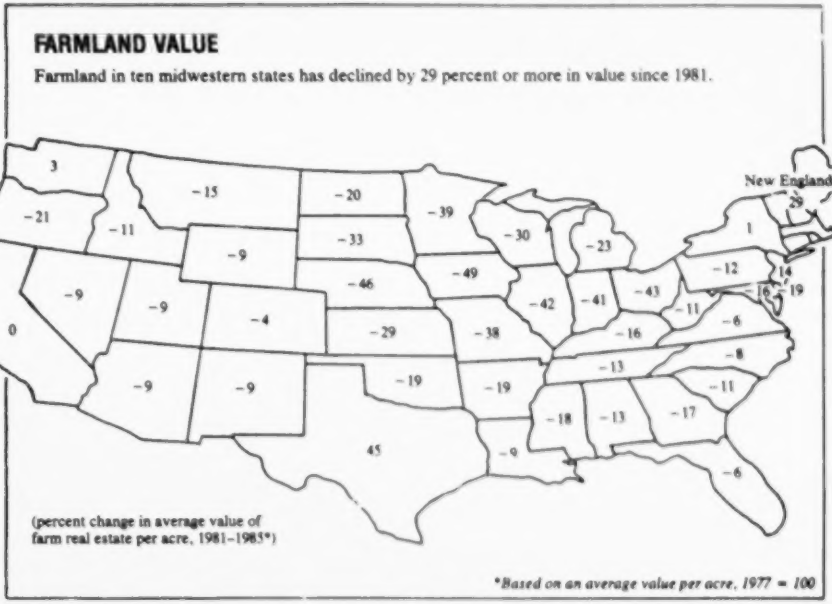


Figure 3. From: *American Demographics*, October 1985.

at about 25–50 percent of their previous market high. This drop in value has been an important factor in the agricultural sector's financial problems. Real estate accounts for over 75 percent of the total value of all farm assets. This means that as land values do down, farm assets also decline. Safe assets are needed to receive credit from banks and government agencies. Thus, farms are less creditworthy as the value of assets are reduced and farmers receive less money when land is sold to pay operating debts.

Credit Crisis

Closely related to the issue of farmland values are the credit difficulties some farmers are experiencing. Table 1 offers a balance sheet of farm assets and liabilities. Assets designated as real estate show a decrease every year since 1982, while the debt-asset ratio has increased. The current rule of thumb is that if a farm has a debt-asset ratio of more than 70 percent it is in severe trouble; between 40 and 70 percent, the farm is facing serious problems. "As of January 1985 there were 229,000 middle-sized farms in serious or severe financial trouble (34 percent of all middle-sized farms in the U.S.) up 29 percent since January 1984. The number of farmers technically 'broke' (owing more than the value

Table 1

Farm balance sheet excluding operator households on December 31 (billions of dollars)

	1982	1983	1984	1985p	1986f
Assets					
Real estate	745.6	736.1	639.6	575–625	555–620
Nonreal estate	232.2	220.4	216.5	200–230	190–235
Total assets	977.8	956.5	856.1	790–840	770–830
Liabilities					
Real estate	101.2	103.7	102.9	96–101	93–99
Nonreal estate	102.4	98.8	96.0	98–102	99–105
Total liabilities	203.7	202.5	198.9	195–202	194–201
Proprietors equity	774.2	754.0	657.2	595–635	570–630
Debt-asset ratio	20.8%	21.2%	23.2%	23–25%	23–26%

p = preliminary
f = forecast

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1985 Agricultural Outlook Conference

From: *Economic Review*, FRB, Kansas City, December 1985.

of their assets) increased by more than 40 percent, to 43,000 farms, between 1984 and 1985."[21] Many of these farms are located in the Corn Belt, Northern Plains, Southern Plains, and Mountain States.

Farm debt is provided by seven types of lenders:

- Farm Credit System with 32 percent of all farm debts
- Commercial banks with 22 percent
- Life insurance companies with 6 percent
- Farmers Home Administration with 12 percent
- Commodity Credit Corporation with 5 percent
- Small Business Administration with 1 percent
- Individuals and other lenders with 24 percent[22]

The Farm Credit System is cooperatively owned by its farm borrowers and is made up of thirty-seven regional banks that issue operating and mortgage loans through local land bank associations and production credit associations and also make loans to farm cooperatives. This federally sponsored credit agency reported that it lost $2.69 billion in 1985, its first annual loss since the Great Depression.[23] The federal government has provided a backup line of credit to the FCS if such a measure is needed to keep it solvent.

Commercial banks with large holdings of farm loans are also suffering. The *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* notes:

> Farm banks—institutions with at least 17 percent of their loans in agriculture—have been particularly hard hit.
>
> Agriculture banks accounted for 69 of the 118 commercial bank failures in 1985, according to the Fed. Potentially vulnerable farm banks rose from 96 to 302 during the past three years.
>
> Banks with 25 percent or more of their portfolios in farm loans make up nearly 28 percent of the bank population, although their assets equal only about 4 percent of all bank assets.[24]

Although these bank closings appear ominous, there is little concern that this will spark a nationwide run on banks.

> Roger Guffey, president of the Kansas City Fed, says he sees nothing looming on the horizon that could spark a regional or statewide crisis in commercial lending. One reason regulators are sanguine is that the percentage of agricultural banks in jeopardy is quite small—the 167 with non-performing assets in excess of capital comes to just over 3% of the 5,000 U.S. agricultural banks. Another is that agricultural banks have comparatively high capital—an average of 9.6% of assets vs. 8.6% for nonagricultural banks—and the vast majority could survive worsening conditions on the farm.[25]

Farm Markets

Farm income depends on the ability of agricultural producers to sell their commodities at market. Slow growth in domestic consumption spells ongoing trouble for the farm sector. Per capita consumption of red meat and dairy products is down, perhaps because many consumers are concerned about reducing rather than increasing calories in their diet.

Foreign markets were expected to take up the excess capacity. After a boom in the late 1970s, export sales have fallen off dramatically. The Congressional Research Service cites a number of factors for the decline in exports including "a strong dollar, worldwide recession, the debt problems of importing nations, increased foreign production, intensified competition abroad as a result of trade and domestic farm policies of other exporting nations and the domestic farm policies of this country."[26]

The importance of developing viable markets is demonstrated by Marvin Duncan:

> The combination of slower growth of population in the United States and strong growth of productivity in U.S. agriculture point toward a time by the end of the century when only half of the current American cropland will be required for domestic use. In short, without growing export markets, U.S. farmers can expect sharp increases in excess capacity that will create escalating finan-

> cial burdens for them and for the taxpayers that provide income transfers to farmers and pay higher food costs than might be available elsewhere.[27]

Additional information on farm income and export policy will be provided in chapter 3.

Federal Government

All three debate resolutions call for action by the federal government. The definition of *federal government* is not controversial to the average person. In ordinary usage, *federal government* refers to the national government, located in Washington, D.C., and its three branches—the Congress, the president, and the federal judiciary. The term *federal government* only becomes an issue in most debates if a negative team offers a counterplan that calls for similar action on the part of each state government. An affirmative team may contend that it is impermissible for a negative team to advocate such a plan because when all fifty states act in unison, they become, in effect, a federal government.

Although this response may have credibility with some judges, there are several arguments that could be used to refute the affirmative's claim. First, even if all fifty states could be called a federal government or part of the "federal system of government," they do not constitute the federal government. In addition, legal literature is devoid of any mention of the term *federal government* in reference to similar state action such as adoption of Uniform State Laws or Interstate Compacts. Whenever the term *federal government* is used, it is in reference to the national government.

A better response to the uniform states action counterplan would be an explanation of the reasons why federal or national government action is required. One reason would be that the federal government has control over hundreds of thousands of acres of federal land, much of which is used for cattle grazing, timber preserves, or waterbed protection. Also, the federal government is the prime sponsor of surface water projects since most major rivers cross several state boundaries. These projects are important to farming and include building dams, flood control efforts, and developing irrigation projects. Third, the federal level of government is constitutionally responsible for setting export policy and maintaining relations with foreign governments. Exports of agricultural products are an extremely important part of farm sector income. Finally, the federal government, through its control of banking and credit, plays an important role in providing loans to farmers.

Federalism

This year's problem area seeks to increase the relative power of the federal level of government at the expense of potential state activity in

agriculture. The clash between federal and state interests is reflected in the original debate between Madison and Hamilton on the proper scope of a federal system of government. In *The Federalist* (No. 45), Madison described his view of dominance by the states:

> The powers delegated by the proposed Constitution to the federal government are few and defined. Those which are to remain in the state governments are numerous and indefinite. . . . The powers reserved to the several states will extend to all the objects which, in the ordinary course of affairs, concern the lives, liberties, and properties of the people, and the internal order, improvement, and prosperity of the state.[28]

Hamilton, however, relied on the general welfare clause to argue for broader powers for the federal government: "The phrase is as comprehensive as any that could have been used because it was not fit that the constitutional authority of the Union, to appropriate its revenues, should have been restricted within narrower limits than the general welfare, and because this necessarily embraces a vast variety of particulars which are susceptible neither of specification nor of definition."[29] Hamilton's position was accepted by the Supreme Court in the 1930s and is the basis for extensive national involvement in economic and regulatory programs.

Under the Reagan administration, there has been a renewed emphasis on state responsibility for domestic programs. At the same time, there is concern that the federal government, under the requirements of the Gramm-Rudman legislation, will reduce its financial commitment for mandated programs, shifting this burden to the states. Traditionally, federal government involvement in domestic issues was justified on the basis that it was the only level of government with the resources sufficient to eliminate program disparity between states when problems crossed state boundaries or required a national minimum level of effort. The states, it was claimed, had weak tax structures, inefficient administrative practices, and parochial orientations. The advantageous aspects of state action included such ideas as the states were closer to the people, were better able to respond to the people's true needs with a minimum of red tape, and were more likely to develop innovative approaches to solving problems.

The federal government has been involved with agricultural issues for many years. In the nineteenth century, grants of land were made to encourage westward expansion and development of the railroads. Current farm programs are a direct descendent of issues facing U.S. agriculture after World War I and the Great Depression. Farm bills passed by Congress during the 1920s were usually vetoed by Republican presidents. However, a major policy shift occurred with the onset of the Democratic Roosevelt presidency.

> The Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933 was the nation's first comprehensive farm program and the first major New Deal legislation directed at agriculture. Its goal was to raise prices by limiting market supplies. Mandatory production controls for basic crops and federal surplus disposal programs were the tools. The Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC)—created that same year by Executive Order—made loans to farmers on their crops. Loan levels were generally set above market rates and loan maturities were set so farmers could hold their crops until prices improved. But the mandatory production controls, an essential part of the program, were declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court and discontinued in early 1936.[29]

The federal government was also responsible for encouraging increased food production during and after World War II to help feed our allies and later for export and emergency relief.

State governments have also been involved in agricultural issues. Many of their functions are shared responsibilities between the states and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. For example, both levels perform agricultural inspections, regulate pesticide use, promote water and soil conservation, and inspect food processing facilities. Other areas of cooperation are enumerated by economist Edward Glade of the U.S. Department of Agriculture:

> Cooperative market news programs are conducted in 43 states under 62 individual agreements, covering fruits and vegetables, dairy and poultry, livestock, grain, cotton and tobacco. In addition, the USDA and departments of agriculture in 45 states assist each other to enforce livestock and poultry licensing registration and bonding laws by providing ownership, volume and operational information to each other. Agencies remain exclusively responsible for enforcement of their own statutes and do not exchange funds.
>
> The collection and dissemination of agricultural statistics provide the basic data necessary for appraising the current and future conditions of state agriculture. In 47 states there are joint state-USDA offices gathering data under the supervision of a state statistician who is a federal employee.[30]

Glade notes that states are also involved in three major areas of support. First, states have an important role in maintaining rural highways and monitoring the rate structures of railroads to insure that local farm communities have easy access to urban markets. Second, assistance is provided for financially troubled farmers. "Through interaction with USDA's Farmers Home Administration (FmHA), local production credit associations, and other leading agencies throughout the states, efforts have been made to establish additional lines of credit, stop farm foreclosures, and extend repayment periods."[31] Third, federal policy requires state and local agricultural agencies to provide educational services, record keeping, and technical assistance. An example of spe-

cial services is provided in a review of state responses to the increasing number of farm foreclosures, as psychologist Val Farmer notes:

> . . . the number of hotlines providing emotional, financial and legal counsel has risen strikingly in the Midwest. State governments and extension services have designed special programs to assist farmers with financial and legal management, job training, relocation services and counseling in stress management for families.
>
> These farmers' unique needs have required a broad array of innovative approaches that take clinicians out of their offices and into the farm communities.[32]

In general, the power of the states in intergovernmental relations is likely to increase in the future. This prediction is based on a combination of factors. One reason is that the states are better able to handle funding requirements. Carl Stenberg, executive director of the Council of State Governments, notes:

> Austerity measures, tax hikes and national economic recovery have improved the fiscal condition of many states and turned budget deficits into surpluses. In contrast, the federal government has become the big spender as well as the big borrower in the public sector. Mounting federal deficits have bolstered efforts to discipline federal fiscal decision-making through a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution and other means.[33]

States are also more capable of effective and equitable governance. Stenberg claims that the "reformers' checklist has been achieved in most states: constitutions have been simplified; governors and legislatures have been strengthened; executive branches have been streamlined; and court systems have been modernized."[34]

Nationally syndicated columnist James Kilpatrick elaborates: "[I]t becomes increasingly evident that the state governments, as a group, are governing more responsibly than the national government. The most interesting political activity these days is often not in the national capital, but in the state capitals. The tendency is to look at Congress with contempt, and to the statehouses—many of them, anyway—with respect."[35]

A major unknown is the effect of the federal budget cuts required to reduce the deficit. *State Government News* reports a new study conducted by the National Association of State Budget Officers that concludes:

> . . . More than half of the $34 billion in tentative fiscal 1986 federal budget reductions to deal with the federal deficit will increase the financial burdens on state and local governments. Program terminations, new initiatives toward federal pre-emption, grant-in-aid reductions, proposals to eliminate deductibility of state and local taxes and tax exemption for state borrowing seem more than likely

> as the 99th Congress begins its deliberations. The four years of wine and roses, if they did exist for the states, are over.[36]

This reduction of federal funds will have a dramatic impact on federal-state relations. The results of budget cuts will become clearer as the year unfolds.

Market Policies

Just as greater reliance on state government action is an alternative to increased federal involvement in agricultural policy, so too is the move to greater reliance on market forces. This new era of deregulation is marked by the elimination or reduction of government rules and regulations that reduce competition. Under a pure free-market proposal, the government would not be involved in supporting farm prices or setting crop quotas. The total removal of the government from the farm sector is politically unlikely, but the Reagan administration is an advocate of increased reliance on market mechanisms. This is operationalized in legislation according to *Agricultural Outlook* as providing a market orientation: "The degree of market orientation is generally gauged by the extent supply and demand forces determine commodity prices and how price changes are passed on to both buyers and sellers."[37] Marvin Duncan, vice president of the federal reserve bank of Kansas City, believes that this move is inevitable.

> The real issue in the agricultural policy debate is not if, but rather when and how, policy will become more market oriented. The current farm financial stress, coupled with the likelihood that economic recovery in the farm sector may be two to four years away, poses the need for an imaginative multiyear adjustment assistance program for farmers. Lacking such assistance, farmers will not accept the concept of market pricing. But, that concept is critical both to a new direction for agricultural policy and to the longer-term well-being of U.S. farmers.[38]

One example of such an orientation emerged in discussions putting together new farm legislation. The Wheat, Food Grains, and Soybean subcommittee of the House Agriculture committee agreed to a plan that would continue direct income subsidies to farmers while instituting a program of marketing loans.

> Marketing loans differ from existing commodity loans by requiring farmers to pay back the government, but only at the rate their crops bring at market, which could be significantly lower than the loan rate.
>
> The current commodity loan program allows farmers to turn their crops over to the government—and keep the loan money—if prices drop below the loan's payback rate.[39]

A second example is provided by the president's budget proposals of the past two years, imposing user fees for meat and grain inspections. This means that the meat and grain industries would pay part of the $347 million expense incurred by the Agriculture Department's Food Safety and Inspection Service. The USDA estimates that if such fees are passed on to consumers, it would result in less than a penny per pound increase in meat and poultry prices. Meat industry leaders argue that such a proposal would undermine public confidence in the integrity and independence of the inspection program and that the proposal represents an unfair tax on food processors.[40]

Constructing a Plan

The primary goal of the affirmative plan is the solution of problems isolated in the affirmative case. To achieve this goal, the plan must eliminate the barriers that are preventing status quo solutions to these problems. A plan might also include provisions to strengthen its workability or avoid any disadvantages. A thoroughly developed plan often prevents certain attacks by the negative team. Yet, a danger exists in presenting so many details that the plan requires too much time to explain. Affirmative plans are broken down into sections (often called "planks" in debate jargon). Major plan sections typically include: administration, mandate, funding, enforcement, and legislative history.

Sample Plan

The following is one example of a plan that could be run on this year's debate topic:

> The Affirmative team proposes adoption of the following plan, to be phased in over a three-year period and adopted through normal democratic processes, including constitutional amendment if needed.
>
> I. A federal agency for tobacco farmland conversion will be established. The agency will consist of qualified persons in the field of agriculture and agricultural economics, and other disciplines deemed necessary by the agency.
>
> II. The agency will administer the following mandate:
>
> A. The planting, farming, and cultivation of tobacco will be outlawed in the United States.
>
> B. All government price supports for tobacco farmers will be eliminated.
>
> C. Tobacco farmers will be eligible for long-term, low-interest loans to cover the cost of converting their farmland for production of other crops.

D. The federal government will purchase any surplus crops from farmland that has been converted from tobacco production at market prices. The surplus will be contributed to international famine relief agencies.

III. The plan will be funded through a national lottery, elimination of the MX missile and strategic defense initiative programs, increased gasoline taxes, and if needed, general federal revenues.

IV. The plan will be enforced through the U.S. Department of Justice. A sliding scale of fines and imprisonment, depending on frequency and magnitude of plan violation, will be established. Private citizen suits to compel plan compliance will be authorized.

V. Affirmative speeches will constitute legislative history for purposes of plan interpretation.

Note that this sample plan begins with an introductory paragraph specifying the phase-time and implementation process. A phase-in is included in plans because it would be impractical to make a significant policy change overnight. It will take time to set up an agency, and farmers cannot reasonably be expected to make major changes in the crops they plant with no warning. An implementation clause is not inherently necessary in an affirmative plan, but it can be useful. Negative teams may try to run artificial arguments against a plan, such as "your plan will be thrown out by the courts because it is unconstitutional," or "your plan destroys the principle of separation of powers because the president cannot veto it or the Supreme Court cannot declare it unconstitutional." These arguments mistakenly assume that the affirmative team is in effect assuming dictatorial powers and forcing this plan on an unwilling government. All an affirmative team is really arguing is that the federal government *should* "see the light" and adopt the affirmative plan. If the affirmative team can convince the judge that Congress should pass this plan, the president should sign it into law, and the constitution should be amended through normal amendment procedures, then the affirmative has met its burden. A plan provision specifying that the team is arguing for plan passage and implementation through the democratic process clarifies what should be the affirmative position against arguments that a plan is unconstitutional.

Administration

The first plank of a plan establishes who will administer the plan. Teams generally opt to set up a new agency because their inherency arguments often indict status quo agencies. If the reason a problem is not being solved now is unwillingness on the part of the responsible people, it is

helpful to put new people in charge. Affirmatives sometimes set up "an independent, self-perpetuating board" to administer a plan. The affirmative team specifies who will initially be on the board, and the board selects their successors. The motivation for putting such a board in the plan is that an affirmative may want to keep current government leaders from using their power to destroy the plan. If an affirmative team puts people who support the plan in charge, and let those people select like-minded successors, then existing political leaders who oppose the plan can do nothing to stop it. Self-perpetuating boards have become less prevalent in recent years, as negative teams began accumulating evidence that boards with this much power become tyrannical and also appoint successors irrationally.

Mandates

The second plank of a plan specifies what new policies will be enacted. These policies must reduce whatever problems the affirmative case has isolated. When the inherent barrier in the present system is structural, the plan should repeal laws that bar solution of the harms, and enact new laws or regulations that insure that the problem will be solved. If the inherency is attitudinal, the mandate should clearly and directly state what action is required. If the mandate is not specific, clever negative teams are likely to contend that the same government leaders who do not want to deal with the problem in the status quo will somehow see to it that the ambiguous wording in the plan is interpreted to lead to the least change possible.

The mandate section of a plan may also include provisions that are designed to get around disadvantages, rather than solve problems isolated in the case. In the sample plan above, plank IIC has that purpose. It is not necessary to give farmers loans to convert their land from tobacco production. The harms of tobacco growing would be solved simply by prohibiting it. However, in anticipation of disadvantages about unfairness to farmers and harm to the economies of tobacco-growing states, it is a good idea to help farmers change to other productive crops. All plan provisions must be topical, thus any part of a plan that is causing an advantage or avoiding a disadvantage must be part of a comprehensive federal agriculture policy. For example, in the sample plan a team could not provide for smoking cessation clinics to help people who can no longer get cigarettes. Such clinics would not be agricultural policy.

Funding

The third section of the plan is the funding plank. Most teams specify how the plan is to be paid for after deciding what the plan will cost. It

is a good idea to find evidence that documents how much money can be obtained from each source because this is a question that will inevitably be asked in cross-examination. Teams may include general federal revenues in their funding. What this means is that the plan will be paid for with the same general pool of funds with which most other federal programs are financed. When general federal revenues are used, it is a good idea to earmark a sufficient amount of money to cover plan costs or the negative team will argue that Congress will not appropriate sufficient funds for the plan (particularly if the inherency argues Congress does not want to solve the problem now). When specific sources as listed such as eliminating MX funding, the negative can then argue that the affirmative proposal weakens our defense capabilities. Thus, affirmative teams must be prepared to defend their funding proposals.

Enforcement

The fourth plan plank is enforcement. It is a good idea to provide for action against people who violate the plan. There needs to be some penalty or people will have no incentive to change their behavior from whatever they are doing now. The plan need not specify a full schedule of fines and imprisonment for each specific offense. This would put too much detail into one fraction of one part of an eight-minute speech. Private citizen suits to compel compliancy can be included as a backup in the event the negative can show that the federal government would not aggressively enforce the plan.

It should be noted that a financing and enforcement plank is not theoretically required in a plan. If no plank for those functions is included, it should be assumed that they are details that will be worked out by the federal government as they implement the plan. However, many judges expect to hear funding and enforcement as part of a plan, because plans are traditionally written that way. Unless they know their judges' preferences, debaters take more risks by leaving out funding and enforcement than by specifying them.

It may also be contended by the negative that funding and enforcement are extra-topical because they are not agricultural policy. However, since this topic calls for a "comprehensive" policy, it can be argued that funding and enforcement are part of a comprehensive plan. Such planks become further evidence of meeting the proposition.

History

The fifth plan plank is legislative history. All this means is that affirmative clarifications of their plan during speeches and cross-examination will be binding regarding how the plan is interpreted. This definition

is analogous to the interpretation of a statute by a court when resolving uncertainties over what Congress or a state legislature meant in a bill. A court may consult the record of the legislative debates to find clues as to what meaning of words the legislature intended. Legislative history provisions do not give an affirmative carte blanche to rewrite their plan or add new provisions. Fairness dictates that once a plan is presented and the negative makes arguments in response, the affirmative cannot try new and different plan provisions. Legislative history only allows for clarification of ambiguous phrasing. A legislative history provision is not required to be in plans—they were not even introduced into policy debate until the mid-1970s. But they do give the affirmative some additional flexibility.

Summary

This chapter has concentrated on some of the common issues shared by all three debate resolutions. The next chapter will examine key concepts associated with the farm export and the cash income resolutions.

3. Farm Income

Resolved: That the federal government should adopt an export program to significantly expand foreign markets for United States agricultural products.

Resolved: That the federal government should guarantee an annual cash income to farmers in the United States.

Overview

American agriculture is supported through a combination of government payments and market sales of farm products. Markets for agricultural products are both domestic and foreign, with foreign sales an increasingly important part of overall profits for the farm sector. A complex series of relationships exists among government programs, farm production, sales, export policy, and foreign production. The projected net farm income and cash income for 1986–87 is estimated in the publication, *Agricultural Outlook:*

> Net farm income in 1986 is projected to range from $22 to $26 billion, compared with $25 to $29 billion in 1985 and $34.5 billion in 1984. Gross income will likely fall more than production expenses.
>
> Net cash income this year is expected to be near 1985, as Government programs continue to support farm income. Net cash income may range from $37 to $41 billion.[1]

These estimates are consistent with those given by the USDA and other government agencies. The message is clear—the farm sector will experience at least one more year of declining income.

This chapter will focus on the income-generating aspects of farming. Specific topics covered in this chapter apply not only to the first two resolutions, but also to the third debate resolution, which calls for federal efforts promoting a long-term agricultural policy. Proposals to increase farm income through domestic sales, subsidies, or exports are critical parts of any real solution to the farm crisis. The major areas of agricultural policy dealt with in this chapter include an examination of *status quo* programs designed by the federal government to address the needs of American farmers; the problems associated with an income policy; and an analysis of foreign markets, exports, and food aid. Before

discussing these major factors contributing to income, a basic understanding of the phrase *agricultural product* and the importance of defining key terms will be noted.

Agricultural Products

At its most easily understood level, the phrase *agricultural products* refers to crops cultivated on a farm. Grain, vegetables, and fruits come most readily to mind as typical examples of farm produce. But sugar, tobacco, dairy products, fiber, eggs, and livestock are also farm commodities. In a broader sense, goods made by various companies involved with agribusiness might also be considered agricultural products. Major examples of such items include farm implements, fertilizer, pesticides, irrigation equipment, and storage facilities. The debater is advised to seek sources for definitions that will either limit or expand the resolution as specific issues are argued in each debate.

Definitions

There are several reasons why it is important to define major terms. Underlying all of them is the need to separate permissible areas for affirmative and negative inquiry. This bifurcation is necessary so that each side in a debate has areas within which to research and to develop arguments. It also adds substance to the various options open to the negative team. For example, the status quo can be identified and issues related to inherency raised. Good opportunities for negative counterplans or topicality arguments often result from analysis by definition. Thus, definitions not only add to clarity but also increase the major issues in dispute.

Argumentation experts note several methods for defining terms. One way is to formally announce the meaning of each word in the resolution near the beginning of the first affirmative speech. Another approach, which is more commonly employed, is to define the resolution operationally as the affirmative plan. It is assumed that this concrete plan will embody the true meaning of the essential words of the debate topic. Of course, specific definitions and arguments that justify this particular affirmative interpretation should be kept in reserve to be used if the negative issues a topicality challenge.

The burden of supplying a reasonable definition of terms rests with the affirmative. Too often this obligation is misconstrued as being met by offering any definition. Actually, it is very important to establish a standard to measure how reasonable or rational the proffered definition really is. The care taken in developing this standard should ultimately determine the victor in a clash of differing approaches to the resolution.

One yardstick is to offer an intuitive idea of what a reasonable person of common sense would consider proper areas for consideration under the debate topic. Sometimes this position is advocated without evidence, and typically, references are made to what the person on the street would consider topical. This approach, if taken without using evidence, places the debater at the mercy of the other team or the judge; they do not need to supply much real refutation to seriously weaken the impact of this type of definition. Nevertheless, a standard dictionary definition, which offers this type of general consensus meaning for words, can provide added authority for the position.

Another approach tries to discover the spirit of the resolution or the interest of the Wording Committee of the National Federation State High School Activity Association. Certainly the provision of a problem area and the publication of *The Forensic Quarterly* makes this an easier task than in college debate, where a parameter statement is the only additional information conveyed by the authors of the resolution. However useful the available information may be early in the summer, most debaters will research the topic more extensively than the wording committee. The pool of knowledge relied upon to formulate the resolution is quickly exhausted—and then exceeded by the industrious researcher. Thus, topicality should not be regarded as a static issue, forever occupying fixed, immutable boundaries. As additional and more thorough sources are explored, ideas of what fits within the topic should also change.

Yet a third approach requires examining the grammatical context of the words and phrases in each resolution. The position of adjectives, dependent or independent clauses, and prepositions may provide an indication of the meaning of important terms.

A final method for discovering meaning is to examine what experts in various fields consider to be relevant information on certain topics. For example, *agriculture* is a very specific term to an economist or to a lawyer. Legal, economic, and business dictionaries each offer an exact definition of this term. Similarly, textbooks, laws, and congressional committees dealing with farm interests also consider a variety of issues that are easily researched. Concepts are clarified by policymakers when they use them in conjunction with certain topics. This field approach also encourages the debater to consider different approaches to problems:

> Thus, a special value of disputation about a proposition's meaning or about any of its terms is that it forces debaters to carefully consider the differences in interpretation which appear across fields. One confronts the nature of fields, as it were, face to face when one grapples with differences in the interpretations of specific terms.

> No better way of illustrating the differences between communities of discourse immediately suggests itself.[2]

Government Farm Programs

As noted in chapter 1, all levels of government are involved in supporting the agricultural sector. But since the days of the Great Depression, the federal government has played the predominant role. The *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* notes the major factors of federal farm policy have remained essentially the same since then. This triparte system involves the following:

- Price-support loans, which supply cash-short farmers with operating money to tide them over until they sell their commodities. The loans help farmers space out sales of what they grow over time, thereby avoiding harvest-time pressures to sell immediately in temporarily glutted markets.

  The loans have effectively become minimum market prices for commodities. If a farmer cannot get at least $3.30 a bushel for wheat—the current price-support loan rate—he may choose to default on the loan, keeping the money and letting the government keep the crop that secured it.
- Production controls, which limit how much land a farmer may plant and, in the most restrictive programs such as those governing peanuts and tobacco, how many pounds of his crop an individual producer may sell each year. The controls are enforced in several ways, including loss of eligibility for federal loans and other benefits for non-compliance, incentives in the form of cash or commodity payments for compliance or, in the case of the administration's huge 1983 PIK program, all of the above.
- Income supplements, of which the most prominent is the current target price program for major crops—wheat, feed grains including corn, cotton and rice. In years when market prices fail to reach statutory "target" levels, the program makes supplementary cash payments to farmers. Called "deficiency payments," they represent the difference between the lower market price and the higher target price.[3]

These basic principles are given substance in statutory provisions of specific farm legislation.

Congress is vitally concerned with the fate of American farmers. A strong "farm bloc" composed of senators and representatives from states with strong agricultural constituencies keep a watchful eye on farm bills. However, there are so many diverse agricultural interests—

each with its own lobby, political action committees, needs, and legislative agenda—that there is no monolithic structure to the farm bloc. This year is an election year for a large number of farm-state senators who recognize the expediency of considering carefully the problems of local voters.

Political concerns and policy needs have resulted in a number of significant pieces of legislation over the past fifty-five years. The Federal Reserve Board of Atlanta chronicled the highlights:

> 1929—Agricultural Marketing Act funded corporations to make loans to marketing cooperatives that would purchase surplus crops.
>
> 1933—Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933 enacted. Instituted a wide variety of production controls for the first time.
>
> 1938—Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1938 features: (1) non-recourse loans, (2) storage payments, (3) parity payments, (4) allotments, (5) marketing quotas, (6) export subsidies, and (7) conservation incentives.
>
> 1956—Soil Bank established comprehensive effort at soil conservation and production limitation.
>
> 1962—Voluntary paid diversion implemented.
>
> 1970—Agricultural Act of 1970 introduced direct programs and the set-aside concept.
>
> 1973—Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act introduced target price concept. A disaster program was introduced.
>
> 1977—The Food and Agricultural Act of 1977 replaced allotments with current planting concepts; deficiency payments now based on normal production from current plantings and set-aside acreage. Farmer-owned reserves (FOR) were created.
>
> 1981—Agriculture and Food Act of 1981 continued target price/deficiency payment programs, farmer-owned reserve programs and set-aside program authority. The acreage reduction program (ARP) was introduced.
>
> 1983—Owing to the large surplus of various commodities, the Payment-in-Kind program was initiated.
>
> 1985—New farm legislation.[4]

In addition to these major legislative acts, the federal government also is involved with many other aspects of the rural economy. Federal interstate highway programs help assure quick access to urban markets. Loans at favorable interest rates are made available to farmers. Other benefits include:

> Public money has financed storage facilities that enable farmers to hold goods off glutted markets; those doing so can also qualify for more generous price-support loans in certain circumstances.
>
> There are multimillion-dollar tax breaks for farming and federally bankrolled rural electric and telephone service.
>
> A world-renowned cadre of experts in agriculture research and development at public land-grant universities and USDA experi-

> ment stations, subsidized irrigation water, and grazing rights on publicly owned land add to federal farm assistance.[5]

Marketing orders issued by the USDA and backed by the federal courts keep substantial portions of certain crops off the market. M. Stanton Evans, publisher of *Consumers' Research* explains:

> Marketing orders are a product of Depression-era legislation intended to restrain production and shore up farm prices. Today there are 47 such orders in effect, concerning fruits, vegetables and nuts. Eleven of these let growers limit production and sales, through determinations made by committees of producers. The resulting decisions are ratified by the secretary of agriculture, and enforced by the federal government, with heavy sanctions, where required.[6]

The *New York Times* offers the claimed advantages and disadvantages of these orders:

> The growers and packers who favor marketing orders say the system benefits growers and consumers alike by resulting in an orderly rather than unpredictable flow of fresh food to the market. Critics argue that marketing orders are a price-fixing mechanism that keeps consumer costs high, insulates growers and packers from the vagaries of the marketplace that other American businessmen must face, and results in the destruction of millions of dollars worth of food that is kept off the market each year. Critics also say the small farmers whose protection was sought when the marketing orders began in the Depression no longer dominate the industry.[7]

1985 Farm Bills

The major federal effort, however, is embodied in the multibillion dollar price- and income-support legislation periodically considered by Congress. A five-year omnibus farm bill costing $152 billion was passed by Congress and signed into law by the president late in December 1985. This bill represented a compromise between the administration, which sought to reduce basic price supports, and an election-conscious Congress, desiring a bill that would subsidize farmers' income at current levels for at least three years. There is not enough space in this publication to provide the details of this bill. Summaries are available in the December 21, 1985 issue of the *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, the February 1986 edition of the *Farm Journal*, and the March 1986 issue of *Agricultural Outlook*.

However, there are several important provisions of the bill that should be highlighted at this time. First, loan rates for major crops are allowed to move toward world market prices. Mark Drabenstott explains the significance of this provision of the law:

> Loan rates would be set at 75 to 85 percent of average market prices for the preceding five years, except that prices could not

> decline more than prescribed limits, usually 5 percent a year. The Secretary of Agriculture, however, would have discretionary authority to lower loan rates another 20 percent a year, 10 percent mandated for 1986. Most analysts agree that lower loan rates are needed to make U.S. farm products more competitive in world markets.
>
> With very large carryover stocks of major crops, the Secretary likely will exercise his authority to lower loan rates further, quite possibly by the full 20 percent.[8]

Second, there is a freeze on target prices on most program commodities for two years. Third, the bill presents several programs to increase farm exports including extra funds for export credit guarantees and the Bonus Incentive Export program as well as an extension of P.L. 480, the Food for Peace program. Fourth, a long-term conservation reserve would idle over 45 million acres of marginal cropland, encouraging farmers to shift such acres to less-intensive use.

In separate legislation, two farm credit programs were enhanced. The Farmers Home Administration will have about $4 billion for loans and loan guarantees in 1986. Government assistance was also provided to the Farm Credit System in legislation with these key elements.

> First, the legislation would establish a back-up line of credit for the system with the Treasury. The amount of assistance is not specified, but would be supplied only when the system had used all of its nonstock capital. Second, the legislation gives authority to the Farm Credit Capital Corporation to marshal capital resources within the system. Troubled loans would be channeled to the corporation to be serviced and worked out, and the corporation would fund the acquisition of those loans by assessing transfers of capital from all banks in the system. Finally, the legislation strengthens the regulatory authority of the Farm Credit Administration, making it a true arms-length regulator.[9]

1986 Legislative Agenda

No sooner was the 1985 Farm Bill passed than major problems were identified. The *Farm Journal* notes: "Overall, farmers get more income support than original debates led many to expect. But there are thorns in this rose garden! Methods for figuring yields, conservation reserve eligibility, dairy bases and livestock checkoffs as originally written all catch some producers."[10] There certainly will be legislative corrections to the omnibus bill to remedy these problems as well as efforts to provide supplemental appropriations to the Agriculture Department's Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC).

Perhaps the greatest concern this year will be the effects of budget cuts in food and nutrition programs proposed in the president's 1987 fiscal spending plan. Almost $10 billion would be cut from existing

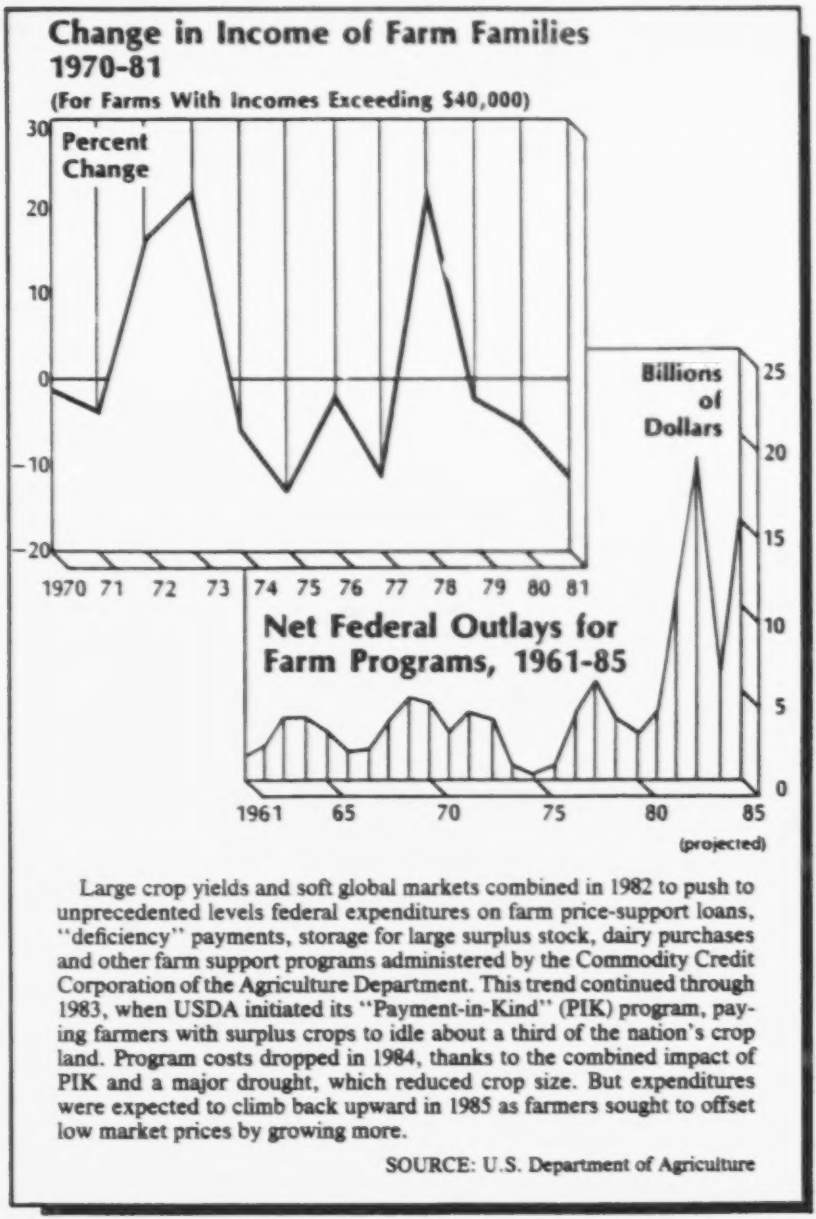
programs, producing a dramatic 18 percent reduction in the 1987 USDA budget. This plan has already run into considerable opposition in Congress and the debater will need to keep abreast of legislative developments during the year. Among major cuts are:

- agricultural research and education cut from $1.1 billion to $988 million
- commodity programs slashed from $20.4 billion to $16.2 billion
- international export programs would be reduced to $3 billion from $5 billion
- rural development programs to be cut from $8 billion to $4.8 billion
- soil and water conservation programs reduced by $200 million
- the Forest Service to be cut by $400 million
- Food stamps and child nutrition reduced by $530 million from $15.9 billion this year.
- imposition of user fees on grain and meat inspections[11]

Reductions in federal programs translate quickly into reduced income for farmers. There is a strong link between government programs and farm income. Figure 4 demonstrates changes in both farm family incomes and net federal outlays for farm programs. The 1985 Farm Bill alone provides an estimated $52 billion in three years for price and income support payments to farmers.[12] Gene Wilson of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta offers a concrete example: "The USDA has projected that, if all price supports were removed, national net farm income would fall 42 percent. Consequently, a general range of lower price supports, reducing net farm income by an uncertain amount, would fall most heavily on producers of supported crops. A reduction in direct government payments certainly would curtail income."[13]

Cash Income

The debate proposition that seeks to guarantee a cash income to farmers would provide a minimum level of economic security in lieu of the fragmented approach of the present system. *Fortune* magazine notes succinctly: "The only form of farm aid that could give farmers substantial relief without enormously expensive side effects would be direct cash payments."[14] But the same article immediately implies that such a proposal is seriously flawed by asking a series of rhetorical questions: "But is that fair or desirable? Could farm-state Congressmen justify handing out moola to a businessman whose untimely investment had cut his net worth from $600,000 to $250,000? And if it is right to make



Large crop yields and soft global markets combined in 1982 to push to unprecedented levels federal expenditures on farm price-support loans, "deficiency" payments, storage for large surplus stock, dairy purchases and other farm support programs administered by the Commodity Credit Corporation of the Agriculture Department. This trend continued through 1983, when USDA initiated its "Payment-in-Kind" (PIK) program, paying farmers with surplus crops to idle about a third of the nation's crop land. Program costs dropped in 1984, thanks to the combined impact of PIK and a major drought, which reduced crop size. But expenditures were expected to climb back upward in 1985 as farmers sought to offset low market prices by growing more.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Agriculture

Figure 4. From: *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, January 26, 1985.

farmers whole, why not the independent gas producer who sunk wells in the Anadarko basin when energy prices were hitting the heavens?"[15] Marvin Duncan and Marva Borowski of the Federal Reserve Board of Kansas City noted that a constrained approach is in order when discussing income equity for farmers.

> Commercial farmers and most part-time farmers have largely achieved income equity with other Americans. It remains a relevant public policy concern for the rural poor and middle-size farmers that are too big to be part-time operators and too small to be full-time commercial farmers. Perhaps the best way to address rural poverty and most other problems of part-time farmers is by improving the economic performance of the general economy, and through rural development, infrastructure, and job training programs. However, to further an income equity objective, full-time farms in the middle-size sales class may require continuing income support. Since their numbers are limited, that might be provided at a reasonable cost to government.[16]

Guaranteed Income

Most proposals for guaranteeing a minimum cash income center on replacing existing welfare programs for all those in poverty. While writing on a guaranteed annual income (GAI) for all citizens, Allan Sheahen provides a list of advantages that would also apply to providing a cash income to farmers:

> The adoption of a guaranteed income would virtually wipe out hunger and poverty in America. It would be used only by a few. . . . It would give each of us the assurance that, no matter what happened, we and our families would not starve.
>
> [In the late 1960s] the President's commission said that simply because one exists, one is entitled to certain inalienable human rights—life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, every U.S. citizen should be guaranteed a minimum income—enough for food, shelter and basic necessities.[17]

Of course, some disadvantages also apply. Such a plan would be costly, determining beneficiaries would be difficult, and a guaranteed income would reduce work incentives. Economic theory indicates that a universal negative income tax (NIT) or GAI would reduce work incentives. "The guarantee reduces hours of work because it provides a source of income that enables families to maintain a given level of consumption without having to work as many hours. The tax rate reduces hours of work because it lowers the economic return achieved from working additional hours."[18] The existence of four Office of Economic Opportunity experiments with a guaranteed income provides a useful source of information on the "real world" effects of such a program. Robert Moffitt, assistant professor of economics at Rutgers University describes the parameter of the pilot projects:

> The experiments were conducted over a number of years in selected "test bore" sites across the country: New Jersey and Pennsylvania (1968–72); rural areas of North Carolina and Iowa (1970–72); Seattle and Denver (1970–78); and Gary, Indiana (1971–74). Three of the tests were limited to specific groups of people; only husband-wife couples were studied in New Jersey and Pennsylvania and in the rural experiment, and only blacks in the Gary test, although the Gary test included both couples and families headed by women. All races and family types were included in the Seattle-Denver study.
>
> The sample sizes for the experiments were: 1,300 in New Jersey and Pennsylvania; 800 in the rural tests; 4,800 in Seattle-Denver; and 1,800 in Gary.[19]

The particular study methodology is provided by Greenberg, Moffitt, and Friedmann:

> In these experiments, families were randomly selected and assigned to one of several experimental groups or to a control group. Experimental families were eligible for cash assistance from income-conditioned cash transfer programs of varying generosity, while control families received no experimental payments but continued to receive whatever benefits they were eligible for under existing assistance programs.[20]

Results from all studies indicate there was a reduction in work effort associated with a guaranteed income.[21] Greenberg and his associates report: "The four negative-income tax experiments have now all produced estimates of the effect of an NIT on the work effort of the participants. Although varying in statistical significance and in magnitude, these estimates, as anticipated, point strongly to a reduction in work effort."[22] There are methodological problems with these studies, as summarized by Robert Moffit:

- The most important qualification is that the experiments by and large lasted only 3 years, a fact which was known beforehand by the families who agreed to enroll. Participants consequently may have behaved differently than they would in a permanent national program, although it is not obvious whether they would respond more or less under non-test conditions.
- Another limitation of the experiments is that they yield very little information on the welfare participation rate one might expect from a national negative income tax.
- A final problem with the experiments relates to the underreporting of income by the experimental and control groups. In the Gary experiment, there is some evidence that the female family heads in the experimental group underreported income substantially more than those in the control group, and that the

reduction in work effort indicated by the data was partly spurious.[23]

The greatest methodological problem is that these studies did not specifically examine the reaction of American farmers to a cash income.

Other Issues

There are other potential problems with creating a program providing a cash income to farmers. First, it aids only one segment of the economy and of the population. Just as some farmers need assistance, so also do other categories of job holders. For example, blue-collar workers in basic heavy industries are also facing structural unemployment and the loss of their way of life. Second, such a proposal assumes that saving smaller family farms is in the best economic interest of the United States. A sharp clash of opinion exists on this issue, with some commentators arguing that small, inefficient operations should sell out to large agricultural corporations. Third, with the Census Bureau's definition of a farm set at $1,000 of agricultural sales, a cash income might draw people into farming just to receive benefits. Such a definition also includes a number of "backyard" farmers whose income is based primarily on nonfarm operations. These individuals would gain income for an activity only marginally related to their economic security.

Rather than force support to economically marginal farmers, an alternate use of resources would be to provide relocation and training benefits to farmers and other displaced rural workers. Various factors such as technological changes, productivity gains, and structural shifts in agriculture will continue for the next twenty years. Marvin Duncan, former vice president and economist with the Federal Reserve Board of Kansas City, notes: "These changes, on balance, will be beneficial to U.S. society, but they will exact some heavy costs on individuals and on many rural towns. Relocation and retraining benefits would make the needed change easier and avoid much of the long-term misallocation of resources accompanying current federal credit assistance programs."[24] This approach would try to integrate individuals into growth sectors of the American economy.

Foreign Food Aid

Domestic surpluses of food spur attempts to increase foreign sales and donations. This portion of the chapter will deal with the latter issues of food aid. The largest aid program, P.L. 480, the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954, was extended for another five years by the 1985 Farm Bill. A combination of factors led to this

extension. As noted in *Major Legislation of the Congress* in 1985; "Large agricultural commodity surpluses in the United States and widespread drought, famine, and starvation in sub-Saharan Africa have focused considerable attention on U.S. foreign food aid programs, especially the largest of these programs, the Food for Peace Program, also known as P.L. 480."[25] Discussions of controlling the production of U.S. food should also consider the impact on foreign food aid programs from such policies.

Many affirmative plans will either by design or effect increase or decrease food production in the U.S. The amount of food produced domestically can be argued to be related to the availability of food for impoverished people overseas. Because feeding starving people is a compelling advantage, teams will inevitably make significance or disadvantage arguments contending that the policies they defend better limit world hunger.

There are two major links between the amount of food produced in the U.S. and the amount of food received by hungry people abroad. First, the need to reduce surpluses has been cited as a major motivating factor for expanded food aid programs.[26] This support for food aid when supplies are plentiful can be contrasted with times when U.S. supplies are tight. When supplies are tight, the natural response in a market economy is an increase in prices. The government is much less enthusiastic about food aid when its consequence is to reduce supply to the extent that food prices rise at home. In April of 1973, for example, P.L. 480 commitments were halted because government officials feared inflation generated by rising food prices.[27] The second link between U.S. food production and aid is also related to price. Once a dollar amount is budgeted for food aid in a given year, the amount of food that can be bought will depend on the price.[28] Thus, any proposal that effects the price of agricultural products will also have a direct impact on the availability of such aid.

World Hunger

The significant impact of the world hunger problem can easily be established. According to Anne Ehrlich of Stanford University, "Sizeable portions of the populations of most developing nations are significantly undernourished, perhaps 750 million people worldwide. UNICEF estimates that some 15 million children die each year of malnutrition and other poverty related causes."[29] According to the president's Task Force on International Private Enterprise, the possibility is strong that within a decade, the developing countries will face a food shortage that is far greater than the present African crisis.[30] It should be noted that in Africa, large-scale assistance was essential to prevent the starvation

of millions of people.[31] Even relatively small changes in food assistance can affect millions of people. Four million tons of grain are sufficient to feed 145 million people.[32] To put the 4 million ton figure in perspective, it should be noted that world grain production in 1983 was 1.5 billion tons,[33] and half of the agricultural products on the world market come from the U.S.[34]

Counterproductive Aid

In 1803, economist Thomas Malthus hypothesized that under good living conditions, the world population could grow geometrically, doubling about every twenty-five years. On the other hand, he said, food production only could increase arithmetically. This hypothesis would create a cruel situation in which populations grow rapidly in good times, but eventually the food supply could not keep up. Without significant increases in birth control, only a rising death rate could restore equilibrium between food supply and population.[35]

Although the specifics of Malthus' theory have not proven true, whenever one debate team argues for an increase in food aid, the opposition is likely to respond that such aid will cause a population increase that will outstrip the available food supply and lead to more starvation in the long run. Although the argument does not make use of the same causal analysis employed by Malthus, in debate jargon the overpopulation argument is frequently referred to as "Malthus."

Overpopulation/Food Arguments

The world's population is skyrocketing. Eight hundred million people have been added to the total since 1974, and world population is likely to pass 6 billion by the year 2000.[36] Farmers are having an increasingly difficult time keeping pace with population growth. According to Lester Brown, president of the Worldwatch Institute:

> For 23 years, world food output expanded at over 3 percent a year, and, although there was concern about rapid population growth, there was a comfortable margin in the growth of food production over that of population. Since 1973, however, annual growth has been less than 2 percent, and the world's farmers have been struggling to keep pace with population.[37]

Populations of several regions in the world are likely to outstrip their food-production capacities by the year 2000 even if all arable land is used to produce food.[38]

U.S. food aid, despite its good intentions, may only add fuel to a major cause of starvation—overpopulation. Eventually, the population increases caused by feeding people now will not be matched by increases in food production. According to Paul and Anne Ehrlich,

> if you deluded people into thinking that either the U.S. could or would supply food in perpetuity for any number of people, you were doing evil. Sooner or later, population growth would completely outstrip the capacity of the U.S. or any other nation to supply food. For every 1000 people saved today, perhaps 10,000 would die when the crunch came.[39]

In addition to exacerbating starvation, overpopulation has other deleterious consequences. Population growth will speed up the destruction of tropical rain forests, as they are cleared to accommodate rising numbers of people and increasing demands for agricultural land. One estimate suggested that with spiraling population growth, these forests could be destroyed within twenty years.[40] Among the harms of such are a reduction in species diversity and a melting of the polar ice caps due to releases of carbon dioxide as the rain forests are cleared.[41] Overpopulation also fuels the pressures that cause wars. As population rises, problems with foreign indebtedness, unemployment, and substandard living conditions are increased. The following idea has been stated by the Population Crisis Committee:

> While rarely the immediate or visible cause of political upheavel, it [rapid population growth] is now a major contributing factor in political conflict within and between countries around the globe.[42]

Refutation of the Overpopulation/Food Aid Argument

There is not universal agreement that population must inevitably outstrip food supply. It is possible that more land can be placed under cultivation and more modern methods of food production employed. The *World Press Review* states:

> [T]he U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization says that only half of the world's potential arable land is under production today. And as population growth rates reached a peak in the past two decades, world food production stayed well ahead everywhere except Africa. It is no accident that it is in Africa, where farming methods are least developed, that famine persists.[43]

Birth control is another means of keeping population growth down and many nations are beginning to support this practice rather than oppose it. Eighty-five countries, ranging from communist Cuba to capitalist Hong Kong, are encouraging birth control or at least tolerating it.[44]

The assumption that more food aid keeps more people alive, thereby causing population increases, is also debatable. A counter-hypothesis, the "child-survival hypothesis," suggests that parents in developing countries want to have a particular number of their children survive the parents' old age. If food aid keeps more children alive, parents will not need to have as many children in order to assure that a given number

live.[45] Although the research in this area may not be conclusive, studies from Pakistan and West Africa have found that the expected number of children a mother will have increases after the loss of an infant.[46] It is even possible that high infant mortality rates motivate additional "insurance" births as well as births to compensate for the deceased infant.[47] If the child-survival hypothesis is true, then food aid could have a very different effect on overpopulation—decreasing the problem rather than exacerbating it.

Evident also are potential moral questions about holding back on food aid to starving people, even if the long-run effect may be overpopulation. For example, Singer states:

> Allowing people to starve to death is a brutal way of controlling population. . . . [I]f there is any alternative, anything at all that we can try that may avoid the horror of widespread starvation, then we ought to try it.[48]

In addition, it can be argued that food aid saves people who are starving now. By holding back on food assistance, nobody's life is really saved. What would happen is that the children and grandchildren of those allowed to die now will never be born, and therefore, never experience starvation. It can be contended that it is more important to prevent present death than to prevent people from being born into miserable circumstances decades in the future. This argument becomes more compelling if it can be proven that there is the possibility of technological innovation in the future that would enable the world to grow much more food (or better implement birth control). Economist Julian Simon has noted that people have always predicted that various resources will run out, but in reality, "such predictions act as a spur to discoveries of new materials or to development of substitutes for the threatened material."[49]

Exports

As noted in chapter 2, United States farmers produce too much for purely domestic consumption. By the year 2000, given current agriculture productivity gains, farmers will produce twice as much food as the U.S. needs. Either the federal government will continue purchasing surpluses through the Commodity Credit Corporation at ever-increasing costs, or more farms will go bankrupt. A free-market approach would not present more attractive alternatives, as Marvin Duncan explains:

> . . . a mature domestic food and fiber market, with only slow growth likely, and rapid growth in the productivity of U.S. agriculture present a problem impossible to solve within the United States. If the sector used its current capacity to produce principally for a

> domestic market, foregoing its future export opportunities, the increases in supply would hold agricultural commodity prices so low that they would bring financial hardship to many in the sector. Alternatively, reducing production enough to maintain acceptable farm commodity prices would require very large production cuts.[50]

The solution is to produce for the world market by dramatically increasing the volume of agricultural exports.

In the twelve years between 1970 and 1982, there was a significant increase in such sales. Mark Drabenstott, an economist at the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, notes: "In 1970, the value of farm exports totaled $7 billion. That doubled in 1973, the year of the first big Soviet wheat sale. By 1980, the value of farm exports had increased to $41 billion. Export volume reached 162 million metric tons by 1980, compared with only 64 million in 1970."[51] Among the reasons commonly cited for this growth were the following:

- the strong world economic growth in developing countries
- the ready availability of credit
- the trade with countries possessing centrally planned economies
- the relatively weak U.S. dollar

The last four years have witnessed a reversal of this trend. Export sales are significantly down in both volume and prices. *Agricultural Outlook* predicts that "U.S. farm product exports in fiscal 1986 are forecast at $29 billion. This would be 7 percent below fiscal 1985's $31.2 billion and nearly $15 billion below the 1981 peak. Export volume is forecast at a little over 120 million tons, down 4 percent from 1985."[52] Table 2 demonstrates the reduction in the value of exports of agricultural products by region since 1983. These data also demonstrate the relative stability of U.S. foreign markets, with most areas experiencing a real decrease essentially across the board. A relatively few countries account for the bulk of U.S. sales.

> In fiscal 1984, nearly 60 percent of the value of all U.S. agricultural exports went to 10 countries. The 10 account for about 80 percent of the export value of U.S. feed grains and over 60 percent of U.S. wheat. Most of the top 10 countries in 1984 were also among the 10 largest 5 years ago, but some shifts have occurred in countries' relative positions on the list.
>
> Most of the countries listed as our 10 largest markets in 1984 were also among the 10 largest 5 years ago. With the exception of the Soviet Union, the composition of the group is fairly stable from year to year.[53]

Figure 5 graphically illustrates those countries who are our primary customers. There have been some changes in the list of largest importers

Table 2

U.S. Agricultural Export Value by Region

Region	Fiscal 1983	Fiscal 1984	Fiscal 1985	Fiscal 1986 forecast
	Billion dollars			
Western Europe	10.148	9.264	7.184	7.0
European Comm.	7.628	6.717	5.336	5.3
Other West. Europe	2.519	2.547	1.849	1.7
Eastern Europe	.827	.741	.531	.6
USSR	.983	2.512	2.509	1.4
Asia	13.588	15.209	11.935	11.4
Middle East	1.482	1.865	1.452	1.4
South Asia	1.170	.867	.600	.7
Japan	5.888	6.935	5.663	5.5
China	.546	.692	.239	.2
Other E. Asia	3.293	3.631	3.138	2.9
S.E. Asia	1.203	1.218	.843	.7
Canada	1.870	1.936	1.727	1.6
Africa	2.272	2.868	2.528	2.3
North Africa	1.452	1.542	1.208	1.3
Sub-Sahara	.821	1.327	1.319	1.0
Latin America	4.865	5.285	4.563	4.5
Mexico	1.777	1.973	1.562	1.6
Cent. Amer. & Carib.	1.130	1.223	1.129	1.2
South America	1.959	2.089	1.872	1.7
Oceania	.223	.216	.204	.2
Total	34.776	38.031	31.182	29.0
Developed countries	18.511	19.179	15.226	14.3
Less dev. countries	13.911	14.907	12.676	12.5
Cent. planned countries	2.356	3.945	3.380	2.2

From: *Agricultural Outlook*, January–February 1986.

of United States farm products as noted by *Agricultural Outlook* in May, 1985:

> Countries that are members of the European Community as well as major U.S. customers have decreased their purchases of U.S. products. Meanwhile, the shares of several developing countries—Mexico, Korea, Taiwan, and Egypt—have increased. The trend is not confined to just the United States' 10 major customers. The share sold to all developed countries fell to 50 percent in 1984 and the developing countries' share rose to 39 percent, each group changing about 5 percent points since 1979.[54]

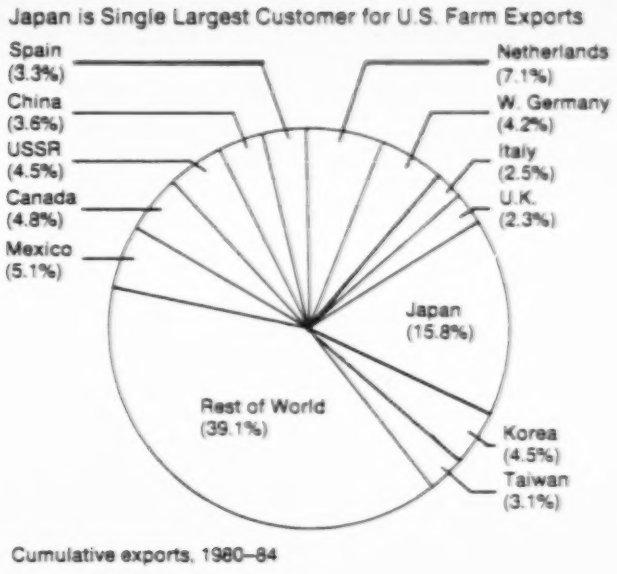


Figure 5. From: *Agricultural Outlook*, May 1985.

Reasons for Exports' Decline

There are a number of reasons listed as contributing to the decline of foreign sales. First, during much of this period, the U.S. dollar was particularly strong, especially when compared to European currencies. G. Edward Schuh concludes that "the export boom of the 1970s is seen to be closely tied to the fall in the value of the dollar. The decline in our export performance is closely associated with the rise in the value of the dollar in the 1980s."[55] Essentially, U.S. goods cost too much for foreign businesses to purchase. This opinion is widely shared by many commentators. However, a recent analysis by Dallas Batten of the Federal Reserve Board of St. Louis indicates only "a weak link between U.S. money growth and real exchange rates and indicates that foreign income—not exchange rates—has been the primary determinant of agricultural exports."[56]

A second major factor in the decline of exports is the extent of agricultural self-sufficiency gained by nations who formerly imported quantities of food and feed grain. The tremendous strides made in this area by the developing countries provide vivid illustrations that countries can increase food production to keep pace with population growth. Such examples undermine the assumption of Lester Brown and others that the United States must be prepared to serve as the breadbasket for

the world. Ward Sinclair, agricultural reporter for the *Washington Post*, cites several countries that only ten years ago were thought to be incapable of feeding themselves:

> The People's Republic of China, with its billion mouths to feed, is expanding its agriculture at historic levels. Food output is up an unprecedented 40 percent in the last five years. Once the importer of 4 million bales of cotton a year, China now exports 1 million bales. Even with bad weather, the Chinese may export 5 million tons of corn this year—roughly the production of Iowa.
>
> Bangladesh, the plight of whose hungry inspired, in 1971, the first rock-music relief concert, is now self-sufficient in food grains. Agricultural production gains have nearly doubled the world's rate for the last 15 years.
>
> India, once thought of as the world's worst basket case, has doubled its wheat production since 1970 and now is trying to sell its surpluses abroad. Its rice production is also up more than 30 percent.[37]

Dennis T. Avery, a State Department senior agricultural analyst, reports other major changes:

> Most of the nations of Latin America, although overshadowed by the huge potential of Argentina and Brazil, have shown steady agricultural growth during the last decade, with more expected as new CGIAR seed varieties and technology come on line.
>
> Guatemala last year had exportable surpluses of corn sorghum and rice.
>
> The Dominican Republic, breaking away from its own reliance on sugar, is expanding its agriculture in all directions.
>
> Even in Africa, perhaps the bleakest agricultural region, the winds of farm change are blowing strong. Successful field trials of a new sorghum variety in the Sudan, and new types of white corn, cassava and rice are lifting yields and hopes throughout West Africa. Better and less-expensive pest-control methods and cultivation techniques are producing almost instant increases in farmers' productivity.
>
> European Community wheat yields are up 23 percent in 1984—mainly because of a new seed.
>
> Indonesia has become self-sufficient in rice from its role as a major importer.
>
> Japan, Taiwan, and the Philippines are trying to cope with rice surpluses.[38]

Most of this growth was accomplished without plowing new lands. Rather, major gains are achieved through use of better seeds, new plant varieties, new farm technologies, and government-sponsored incentives for farmers. The result is that between 1971 and 1982, world agricultural output rose 25 percent and the output in the less-developed countries was up 33 percent.[39]

Third, the United States is facing increased competition for export trade. Some United States products are more expensive than those

offered by other countries. The growth in agricultural self-sufficiency noted above also let these countries compete with the U.S. in export markets. For example, foreign competition will reduce the volume of U.S. fresh and processed fruits sold to Canada, cotton sales to Japan, rice sales to Asia and the Middle East, and wheat sales to Brazil.[60] Ironically, foreign farmers can sell some commodities to U.S. buyers cheaper than domestic producers. The *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* notes that the USDA indicates that agricultural imports in 1983–84 rose 15 percent over the previous years. "Export sources say this year that Thai rice, Argentine wheat and Brazilian soybeans could be delivered cheaper stateside than home-grown. Canadian pork and lumber are being sold in the United States; Canadian grain may soon follow. In 1983 the United States imported more tobacco than it sold abroad."[61]

These factors combine with others such as slow worldwide economic growth, trade barriers, and export subsidies by other exporters to reduce U.S. sales. Economist Drabenstott explains that soft exports have been a primary cause for the decline in real farm income throughout the 1980s and into 1986.

> With slumping foreign demand, U.S. grain surpluses have grown larger and crop prices have moved lower. Agribusinesses have felt the effect of declining farm exports in both lower sales of farm equipment and reduced grain shipments. Grain companies, for example, are currently using only about 40 percent of peak export capacity. The prolonged decline in farm exports is a major cause of agriculture's bleak outlook for 1986.[62]

Improving Export Sales

Numerous approaches exist for improving sales of agricultural products to other countries. At the most general level, macroeconomic forces, freer international trade, and foreign economic growth will be critical to restoring the U.S. farm sector. Drabenstott notes that "the combination of U.S. fiscal and monetary policy has direct effects on U.S. interest rates and the exchange value of the dollar."[63] As discussed earlier in this chapter, the strength of the dollar is seen as an important key to foreign sales. Controlling federal budget deficits would also assist farm exports by reducing production costs, lowering interest rates, and improving business investments abroad.

General efforts to decrease barriers and promote world trade would also benefit agriculture and the rest of the economy. Negotiations should seek to reduce both tariff and nontariff impediments to the flow of goods across international boundaries. Current efforts are directed primarily at reducing such nontariff barriers as health and labeling regulations and domestic export subsidization.

A final general policy issue involves raising the income level of developing countries. Viewed as a necessary precondition to expanding trade, Mark Drabenstott explains, "the economic performance of middle-income and developing countries will be the linchpin to any expansion in trade. While agricultural development is crucial in many recipient countries, their own food production gains are unlikely to be great enough to meet the increases in food demand brought about by rising incomes."[64] This view is seconded by Professor Alex McCalla of the University of California, Davis. Based on McCalla's projections and analyses, economist Marvin Duncan observes:

> Thus, demographic patterns in the developing countries, when coupled with continued rapid growth in U.S. agricultural productivity, provide an opportunity for growth in U.S. agricultural trade with these countries. However, while these countries have rapid population growth and a high propensity to spend income gains on food, an equally vital factor is often missing, that of income growth sufficient to turn human need into effective market demand. Improved economic performance is essential to growth in food demand in less developed countries.[65]

Cost Reductions

To remain competitive in world markets, U.S. farmers must reduce their costs. There are savings that can be realized at several different levels. First, production costs could be reduced and productivity increased through more efficient use of resources in growing crops or raising livestock. For agribusinesses it means merger or consolidation of firms to eliminate excess capacity and increase profit margins. Second, transportation costs could be reduced. For example, there has been increased scrutiny of the Cargo Preference Act, which requires USDA to ship 50 percent of exports on U.S. flagships. The National Association of Wheat Growers estimates that "at a minimum, cargo preference subsidies cost about $.80 a bushel for wheat, feed, grains, and soybeans (through lower farm incomes, higher farm program costs and lost export sales)."[66]

Third, domestic farm support programs may effectively price our products out of world markets. These programs were discussed earlier in this chapter and, in general, prop up agricultural prices. The *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* explains:

> Increasingly, price support devices, such as pre-established loan rates and deficiency payments are being viewed on Capitol Hill, as well as among farm exporters, as hindrance rather than help to competing in foreign markets. Critics say they are keeping prices artificially above world market levels and forcing the government to buy up and store much of the stocks.
>
> By lowering loan rates, in particular, many members now believe that U.S. farmers once again could be competitive in foreign mar-

> kets and the government could rid itself of the huge surpluses that are becoming more and more costly to maintain.[67]

This view certainly reflects the position of the present administration. Ward Sinclair describes the basic concept behind this approach. "Washington's New-Think holds that artificially high U.S. farm prices, propped up by government supports, spur competing nations to increase their farm output and eventually displace American products. Drive U.S. prices down, this theory goes, and competitors will have to give up their farm-export subsidies, buyers will flock to the 'preferred' American goods and U.S. farmers again will prosper."[68]

Government Programs

There also are government programs established to encourage export sales. Thirty states have established fifty-four overseas offices to expand foreign markets. Gregory Migano, executive director of California's World Trade Commission, says "foreign trade has come of age. It exploded on the national level last year, and now it's exploding on the state level. Once again, it's welled up from the grass roots. It's been the local exporter, the local chamber of commerce and the local trade groups that have been making this their issue for years."[69] *State Government News* also reports that "because of the heightened importance of exports to the agricultural economy in recent years, many state departments of agriculture have added international trade specialists. Roughly half the states and territories now have one or more international trade specialists; at least four states have four such staffers."[70]

States are becoming involved in promoting sales of specialized food exports. An area of increasing importance in the agricultural export market is value-added products—processed agricultural products such as canned goods, frozen juices, and flour. This market is worth about $100 billion a year, but the United States' share is only 13 percent. Former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture John Block "announced a goal of boosting that share to 20 percent by the end of this decade—a gain that will generate more than 1 million new jobs and up to $25 billion more in gross national product for the U.S. economy. However, to meet this goal, more U.S. firms need to participate in the export process."[71]

Marvin Duncan cites the importance of this type of trade:

> To continue growth in trade with industrial countries, more attention will need to be given to marketing processed agricultural products and food items abroad. This may be a way not only of increasing total export value but also of increasing domestic job formation in food processing. Also, increased value-added exports would help provide a more stable level of demand. But because most, if not

> all, of the value is added beyond the farm gate, an increase in processed exports is not likely to add much to farm product prices.[72]

He goes on to explain that there are barriers to rapid expansion of this market:

> Yet optimism over processed exports must be tempered with realism. Several impediments are likely. Country-specific food preferences are one. Also, the United States has imported many new processed food lines in recent years, raising the question of whether U.S. products can match foreign competition. Finally, many countries with excess capacity in processing agricultural products prefer to buy the raw materials and add the processed value themselves.[73]

The federal government has recognized the importance of expanding export sales. Major provisions of the 1985 Farm Bill address the issue of expanding foreign markets. The *Farm Journal* indicates:

> The 1985 Food Security Act packs more firepower for U.S. export competitiveness than any other farm bill. A senior House Ag committee staffer who helped engineer details of the bill says candidly, "I don't know what else we could do with farm exports but give them away free."
>
> By slashing U.S. loan rates, instantaneously—perhaps 15% to 30% in 1986 alone—Congress is gambling that firesale prices will help rebuild export markets. And they may bankroll the most expensive farm programs in history to protect U.S. farm incomes while exports and market prices adjust.[74]

A few of the more important provisions are cited in the *Economic Review* of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City:

> The bill would bolster credit and other programs to increase exports. Commodity Credit Corporation export credit guarantees would be increased to at least $5 billion in each of the fiscal years from 1986 through 1989. The intermediate export credit program, which guarantees loans of three to ten years, also would be strengthened to at least $1 billion per year. The bill also would extend and enhance the Bonus Incentive Export Program (BICEP), sometimes called the export PIK program.[75]

Agricultural Outlook explains that the export bonus plan offers government-owned commodities purchased by the Community Credit Corporation to generate additional commercial sales. The focus is on foreign markets, where the U.S. has lost market shares because of unfair trade practices used by competing exporters.[76]

Summary

Providing a cash income or increasing exports would increase the income of farmers. However, the social and economic consequences of such actions must be considered in light of diverse agricultural interests. The next chapter will explore issues associated with developing a long-term comprehensive agricultural policy.

4. Comprehensive Agricultural Policy

Resolved: That the federal government should implement a comprehensive long-term agricultural policy in the United States.

Basic Concepts

This resolution is the broadest of the three on the problem area of U.S. agricultural policy, so the affirmative team will be able to include a wide variety of provisions in its plan, as long as the provisions can be proven to be "agricultural." The other two resolutions could be viewed as subsets of this one, and plans that are topical under them may be topical under this resolution. Two words in this topic impose constraints on affirmative teams. First, the affirmative's policy must be *comprehensive*. It is often in the affirmative team's interest to choose one specific part of agricultural policy because the preponderance of evidence on that subject favors the affirmative, or because they hope to catch the negative team unprepared for their particular case area. Negative teams are likely to respond that a single issue plan is not broad enough to be comprehensive, and the definition of that term will be central to the outcome of the debate. The second word that may give affirmative trouble is *long-term*. An affirmative plan cannot represent a piecemeal, temporary solution to America's agricultural problems. It must establish a policy that will remain consistent for a period of years. Other key terms in this particular resolution will now be defined.

Agricultural

Two major sources for definitions may be used for this term: dictionaries and contextual evidence. Many court cases have had to consider the meaning of agriculture over the years, and legal dictionaries and related works are replete with possible definitions.

At a general level, *agricultural* has been defined as "pertaining to or dealing with agriculture; also, characterized by or engaged in farming. . . ."[1] Agricultural includes the activities typically associated with farm-

ing, such as preparing the soil, planting seeds, raising and harvesting crops, and rearing and managing livestock.[2] Agriculture is a broader term than farmer or farm laborer,[3] and has been held to include horticulture, forestry, and butter-, cheese-, and sugar-making.[4] It has been noted that the long-standing intent of Congress is that agriculture be broadly defined.[5]

A distinction is made in these definitions between activities on the farm and off-farm activities that affect farms. Thus, employees of an irrigation company that furnished water to farmers are not considered to be engaged in agricultural labor.[6] The same is true with such processes as making butter when they do not occur on the farm. When work is specialized and removed from the farm, it is industrial rather than agricultural.[7]

A second source of evidence for a definition of *agricultural* is contextual. Contextual evidence comes from experts or policymakers who deal with the issues raised by the topic. In 1984 and 1985, Congress held hearings to consider a successor to the Agriculture and Food Act of 1981. The issues raised in these hearings put a slightly different light on defining agricultural. Many programs that influence or affect agriculture were considered, including some that would not place direct regulation on activities on the farm. The efficacy of the payment-in-kind program as a solution to low farm incomes was considered.[8] Policies that promote soil and water conservation were also discussed.[9] The importance of expanding agricultural exports and promoting free trade in agriculture was taken up.[10] The questions of farm credit, and what can be done to enable farmers to better cope with their debt load were discussed.[11]

Another suggestion was that we "tap the humanitarian potential of American agriculture by reestablishing an aggressive, well managed food for peace program that fairly compensates U.S. farmers to help feed the world's hungry."[12] Evidence that agricultural policy includes the policies of agencies other than the U.S. Department of Agriculture was provided by Melissa Arnold, representing the California Grape and Tree Fruit League:

> "[I]t is appropriate to include in the bill such policy issues as pesticides and farm labor. Both issues, although regulations are dealt with in other agencies, are major components of agriculture and should be reflected in our nation's agricultural policy."[13]

Thus, there is definitional support for a wide variety of cases under this resolution.

A final definitional constraint, problem area topicality, will be relevant with some judges. This year's problem area is "What agricultural policy would best serve the economic interests of the United States?" If plans must promote U.S. economic interests, questions on the work-

ing conditions on the farm or the environmental consequences of farming will only be relevant to the extent that they are proven to enhance U.S. economic interests. It should be noted that there is not universal agreement within the debate community that affirmative plans must satisfy the problem area as well as the resolution. Thus, careful judge analysis should be undertaken when selecting a case.

Comprehensive

The word *comprehensive* has been a source of controversy on almost every debate topic in which it has been employed. Available definitions are not sufficiently precise to enable debaters to determine when a plan does enough to be called "comprehensive." When an affirmative plan deals with just one aspect of agricultural policy, such as farm safety or better living conditions for migrant farm workers, a topicality attack that the policy is not comprehensive is likely to be employed.

Several arguments can be made that single issue plans are not comprehensive. *Comprehensive* has been defined as requiring "something beyond a piecemeal approach."[14] When contrasted with the wide variety of issues that relate to agricultural policy in America, from subsidies to bankruptcy, to erosion to water, a case that only deals with one issue could easily qualify as a piecemeal approach. *Comprehensive* has also been defined as "covering completely or broadly."[15] If the assumption that a plan must deal with the subject of agriculture comprehensively is valid, a single concept case would hardly provide complete coverage.

Evidence that a comprehensive policy need not deal with all issues exists. One definition explicitly states that comprehensive means "including much, comprising many things, having a wide scope, inclusive, but not as meaning all-inclusive." As most single issue plans will likely cover hundreds of thousands of farms and apply several regulations that are relevant to that issue, affirmative will generally be able to satisfy this definition. Another definition notes that a comprehensive plan "connotes full consideration of problems presented and reasonable and uniform provisions to deal with them."[16] Most affirmative plans will attempt to fully deal with the problems presented and make reasonable and uniform provisions to solve. An analogy to a comprehensive zoning plan also supports more limited affirmative cases. Such a comprehensive plan has been held to connote an "integrated product of rational processes designed to lessen congestion in streets, secure safety from fire, panic, and other dangers, promote health, morals, or general welfare, [prevent] overcrowding of land or buildings, *or* avoid undue concentration of population"[17] (emphasis added). The use of the conjunction *or* indicates that any "integrated product of rational processes" will suffice as comprehensive, even if all possible issues are not dealt

with. This definition places the focus on whether the plan itself is comprehensive, rather than whether the subject of agriculture is comprehensively dealt with. Since *comprehensive* modifies *policy* in the resolution, rather than *agricultural,* this definition seems reasonable.

When preparing an affirmative plan, debaters should be aware that the subjective nature of the term *comprehensive* leaves much latitude for the judge. If he or she is of the opinion that a proliferation of small cases is bad for debate, or that such cases constitute unfair tricks, a single issue case may be voted against on the comprehensive issue. Judges that are more liberal on topicality will be more accepting of single issue cases. A single issue case will also be more likely to seem comprehensive to a judge if it deals with a major, well-publicized issue, such as farm subsidies, debt, or erosion, rather than a lesser-known issue, such as the education of migrant farm workers' children.

Long-Term

In the context of agricultural policy, a long-term plan must last for a period of years. Texas Commissioner of Agriculture Jim Hightower noted in hearings on *long-term* farm policy:

> Write a long-term program, preferably 6 years or more, so that farmers can count on that program, so that they can plan from one year to the next.[18]

A long-term plan should also take a look at agriculture's needs over the long haul, rather than merely reacting to an emergency. As Congressman Stenholm from Texas pointed out:

> I hope these hearings will look at long term needs . . . We desperately need to think in years, not just days. One of our problems in Congress is that every bill is an emergency.[19]

A long-term plan should deal with causes at the root of the problem, rather than take a temporary "band-aid" approach.[20]

Debaters should be aware that in other contexts, such as capital gains from the sale of stock,[21] or detention of accused criminals,[22] *long-term* has been defined in terms of days or months. However, these definitions from other fields should not beat out definitions in the context of agricultural policy.

Case Concepts

The various agricultural issues discussed in this chapter could be included in an affirmative plan under this resolution or run by themselves if sufficiently comprehensive. It should be kept in mind that the ideas

discussed in chapter 3 on the other two resolutions could also be considered all or part of a comprehensive agricultural policy. The cases in this section were selected either because they are currently controversial issues, because bills on the subject have recently been introduced in Congress, or because they have been viable affirmative approaches under previous debate topics in high school or college.

Alien Labor in Agriculture

The question of how many foreign workers, if any, should be allowed to work on America's farms is a very controversial issue. Evidence exists to support two diametrically opposite affirmative cases. One position is that there are too many foreign laborers, and employment of illegal aliens on the farm should be unlawful. A second approach would be to contend that a sufficient number of American workers do not find manual agricultural labor appealing, and a proposal is required that increases the number of foreign workers who could legally be admitted to the United States. After exploring the present situation concerning foreign workers in agriculture, this section will take up the question of whether foreign workers take U.S. workers' jobs and discuss possible affirmative plans.

The Status Quo

Increasing numbers of illegal aliens are entering the United States. Although the exact number may be difficult to quantify, their numbers are certainly in the millions—6 million according to one estimate.[23] At least 60 percent of these immigrants come from Mexico, and falling oil revenues and high unemployment in that country make further illegal immigration inevitable.[24] A significant number of illegal aliens work in agriculture. They are estimated to constitute 250,000 of California's 350,000 farm workers, and about another quarter of a million are working on farms in other states.[25] Although the immigration itself is illegal, there is currently no law that makes it unlawful to hire an illegal alien.

A limited number of aliens are allowed into the United States legally under the H-Z program. The H-Z program allows 20,000 to 40,000 persons into the U.S. for temporary jobs, and agricultural employment accounts for 40 percent of all such workers.[26] In theory, the program only allows in alien laborers when unemployed persons are not capable of performing such labor in the United States. However, it has been contended that employers do not try hard to find domestic workers, and that enforcement of such requirements is weak.[27]

Domestic Worker Displacement

The major significance issue for an illegal aliens' case is whether the aliens take jobs that otherwise would have gone to American farm workers. Agricultural unemployment is very high—13.5 percent in 1984 and 14.3 percent as of September 1985.[28] Affirmative teams can contend that American employers have a preference for foreign workers for a number of reasons. Such workers cost less to employ.[29] In addition, illegal aliens will accept inferior working conditions.[30] Because they are here illegally, they are reluctant to seek enforcement of legislation guaranteeing farm workers' rights—the last thing they want to do is disclose their presence to government officials. Some workers live in holes in the earth, rather than employer-provided housing, because they fear raids by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).[31] Employers thus have an economic incentive to hire foreign workers, and many will go out of their way to get them.

Negative teams can take the position that foreign laborers are hired because American workers will not take the jobs such workers are willing to do.[32] Many commodities must be picked by hand. The work is very difficult and is often done in hot weather. The experience of a Fresno boysenberry farmer illustrates the negative position:

> Just before harvest, federal agents swept through a nearby field and scared away the farmer's illegal immigrant workers. They would not come back, so the farmer advertised in Fresno for U.S. workers. Despite high local unemployment, no one showed up, and he lost the entire crop.[33]

Vacant Jobs

Not everyone agrees that U.S. workers will not take agricultural jobs. Economics professor Vernon Briggs of Cornell University has noted that the vast majority of farm workers are U.S. citizens.[34] In addition, agriculture has become increasingly mechanized, reducing the number of crops that must be harvested by hand.[35] Negative teams have additional options to deny the link between illegal immigrants and farm unemployment. If farmers can get foreign workers for less money, they can move to the labor force if that force is kept out of the U.S. For example, labor costs in South America are so low that a grape grower can move his or her operation to Chile, ship the grapes to the U.S., and sell them to stores in California for less than California-grown grapes.[36] Similar competition is cropping up from other nations in citrus, tomatoes, olives, and other produce. If growers move their operations out of the country, not only will American farm workers not be employed, but there will be job losses in the packing sheds, truck yards, and other sectors as well. These job losses would number in the tens of thou-

sands.[37] These ancillary jobs will also be lost if perishable crops cannot be harvested due to a dearth of domestic workers.

Prohibit Employment

If debaters believe that illegal aliens are taking jobs from Americans, they could prohibit the employment of illegal immigrants in agriculture. Such a proposal would "remove the economic magnet that draws people to the U.S. by denying them jobs."[38] The removal of aliens from the work force would eliminate the competition from illegal immigrants that makes it very difficult for U.S. workers to improve their living conditions. If American employers need more workers to harvest their crops, they will need to "do the things that every other employer in the U.S. must do—make the job attractive to workers through increased wages, better benefits, [and] better working conditions."[39]

Disadvantages to such a proposal can be argued. First, if U.S. workers cannot be found to replace the illegal aliens currently employed on U.S. farms, the economic implications could be significant. Perishable crops, which need to be harvested at precisely the right time or they may be lost, are grown in every state of the nation. Farmers need to be able to hire alien workers when they are more readily available, rather than wait for a successful recruitment of domestic workers that may never occur. Since perishable crops are worth $23 billion to the U.S. economy, their loss would be very significant.[40]

In addition, arguments can be made that workers should be able to leave Mexico and work in the United States. If it can be argued that all human lives are of equal value, regardless of their country of birth, negatives can contend that illegal immigration is necessary due to Mexico's economic troubles. Illegal immigrants make a significant contribution to the Mexican economy:

> Research by the Colegio de Mexico finds that undocumented workers contributed some 1.8 billion dollars to Mexico's economy in 1984. That's almost 10 percent of the nearly 22 billion dollars Mexico earned from its exports. . .[41]

Mexican states near the border have far more people than their land can support. America's own self-interest could justify tolerance of illegal aliens. According to Hispanic rights activist Tony Bonilla, "absent the safety valve we've [the U.S.] been for Mexico, we could make it ripe for social revolution and greater communist infiltration."[42]

A disadvantage based on civil rights may also be launched. Because so many illegal immigrants come from Mexico, brown-skinned people are more likely to be suspected as illegal immigrants than are others. Thus, the many American citizens of Hispanic origin are at greater risk of being questioned or detained than are other citizens. Thus, it is not

surprising that many Hispanic members of Congress are opposed to legislation making it illegal to hire undocumented aliens.[43]

Increase Employment

A second, completely different direction an affirmative team could take would be a plan that increased the number of foreign agricultural workers who could legally come in to the United States to work. As part of a general law that deals with the illegal immigration issue, a proposal has been made to permit a total of 350,000 foreign agricultural "guest" workers to come into the United States at one time. The justification for this proposal is that growers of perishable crops rely heavily on workers from foreign countries, and that available domestic workers are not sufficient.[44] Growers strongly favor this legislation as part of an immigration reform package.

There are, however, possible problems with such a plan. In the 1960s, under the "Bracero Program," foreign workers were brought in for temporary agricultural employment. They became "captive workers, with inferior legal status, sub-standard wages, poor housing and miserable working conditions . . . in a large number of instances."[45] Even if regulations are attempted to insure better conditions, it is argued that under both the H-Z program of the status quo and the Bracero Program, the rights of domestic and foreign workers could not be safeguarded.[46] New legislation is argued to be no better. Additional disadvantages could be based on the contention that these 350,000 workers would take jobs from American citizens who badly need the work.[47] Another concern is that once the workers get into the United States legally to do agricultural work, they will spill over into other occupations as well, taking yet more jobs from American workers. Enforcement would not be adequate to prevent such a spillover.[48]

Proponents of an increase in legal agricultural employment of aliens argue that these disadvantages need not occur. Housing, workers' compensation insurance, and adequate wages can be mandated. In order to be certain that workers will not stay in America and find other work, a portion of their wages could be withheld and returned only after they departed from the United States.[49]

Water Resources

The 1985–86 high school debate topic dealt with issues of water quality. Much of the information researched last year will apply to a discussion of the role of this resource in agriculture. There are two general problems with the water supply—depletion and contamination. A recent

forecast by the Futures Group for the Trend Analysis Program of the American Council of Life Insurance listed the water shortage as one of the five potential large-scale catastrophic events facing the United States and the world. Their conclusion was:

> The United States has abundant overall water supplies but, as in the case of many other natural resources, poor management and wasteful use patterns are cutting into both supply and quality. If present trends continue, almost every section of the country will likely face some form of water shortage by the turn of the century. In the West and Southwest, the major problem is availability of supply; in the High Plains area, depletion of underground aquifers; and in the East, quality of drinking water.[50]

Farmers use approximately 83 percent of all the water in the United States. The water used in agriculture is derived from two sources: surface water, such as rivers and lakes, and groundwater, which lies below ground and is pumped to the surface. Of the two, groundwater is the most important source for the rural supply. E. Phillip Leveen from the University of California, Berkeley notes:

> Groundwater provides approximately half of the nation's drinking water. This figure includes over 80 percent of rural water needs for home use and livestock and over 40 percent of the water used in irrigation, as well as significant percentage of the needs of industry. Dependence on this resource has expanded considerably; withdrawals have increased at a rate of over 3 percent per year over the past 30 years. The growth has been accompanied by serious problems.[51]

Depletion

The Trend Analysis Program examined the projected use of both surface and groundwater and concluded with the U.S. Water Resources Council that

> . . . there will be inadequate surface water supply by the year 2000 in 17 of the 106 U.S. water resource subregions, mostly in the Midwest and Southwest. Conflicts will grow between domestic, industrial, and agricultural uses and fish habitation, recreation, and hydroelectric uses.
>
> In the case of ground water, the availability problem centers on overdrafts—withdrawal of water faster than it can be recharged. Groundwater overdraft is occurring in the High Plains, in south-central Arizona, and in parts of California. Of every 100 gallons of water removed, only 74 are replaced. As depletion progresses, groundwater levels decline, spring and stream flows diminish, fissures form, land subsides, and in some cases salt water finds its way into the freshwater aquifiers.[52]

It is becoming increasingly difficult to tap additional supplies of surface water. Among the reasons frequently cited are:

- the reduction of funds for new water projects
- the scarcity of new reservoir sites
- the abounding intergovernmental problems with interbasin water transfers
- the dramatically increased costs for securing water
- the concerns for the environmental impact of water resource development

The most abundant source of water lies under the ground. Approximately 15 quadrillion gallons of water are within one-half mile of the surface. Despite the tremendous size of this reserve, the United States has doubled total groundwater withdrawals over the past twenty-five years. As with surface water, there will be increased demand placed on such subsurface resources. Among the more important factors leading to increased use are:

- Rapid expansion of sunbelt cities with inadequate supplies of surface water.
- The need to utilize water supplies capable of weathering long periods of drought. Although the groundwater resource is not immune to drought, its sheltered environment and the large volumes of groundwater in storage lend the resource to supplementary water service during times when streamflow and surface storage are deficient.
- Increased use of irrigation in all areas of the country.
- Consumption of large quantities of water by new energy-producing industries, ranging from power generation to coal mining to coal sluices.
- The decreasing availability of surface water in many areas of the nation.[53]

The drawdown of reserves will be particularly harmful to U.S. agriculture, a prime user of water. Over 80 percent of all water consumed in the United States is for agriculture and over 80 percent of this water is for irrigation. Federal government programs have built dams and irrigation projects, bringing low-cost water to farmers in the western states. This water has turned semiarid land into productive cropland. However, continued reliance on groundwater will ultimately dry up the usable supply. "U.S. Department of Agriculture officials estimate that groundwater depletion will seriously affect farm production on some 15 million acres in eleven states by the next century. Texas alone may lose as much as half of its irrigated farmland—about 3 million acres—by the year 2000. Some landowners may attempt dryland farming—eking out

crops without irrigation—but most will have to abandon their farms."[54] The continued productivity of these farmlands is essential. As journalist James Udall reports in *National Wildlife*,

> although less than 10 percent of U.S. farmland is presently irrigated with groundwater, these acres are vital to the country's food production. Water pumped from just one aquifer, the Ogallala—which underlies a vast area from South Dakota to Texas—irrigates land that produces nearly a fourth of America's cotton, 15 percent of its grain and almost 40 percent of its beef cattle. Unfortunately, the Ogallala's water level is dropping in some areas by as much as three feet per year. Meanwhile, in the nation's single most productive agricultural region, the San Joaquin Valley of California, farmers are pumping some 600 billion gallons more water from below ground each year than is recharged naturally.[55]

Chemical Contamination

Chemicals are used in fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides to bring profitable farming to marginal land. However, water runoff from fields creates problems, as noted by Lindsey McWilliams: "While water and agricultural chemicals have helped to set new crop production standards, they sometimes have combined to pollute groundwater and endanger the health of people, livestock, and other animals."[56] An example of this process is found in the Central Sands region of Wisconsin. Irrigation has made it possible to cultivate land that otherwise could not support profitable farming. Unfortunately, University of Wisconsin researchers have discovered that growers overirrigate: "Lacking the means to monitor soil moisture and the anticipated demands of his crop, the farmer must, as a management decision far outweigh the cost of extra water."[57] The consequence of this inefficient use of water is explained by McWilliams:

> Excessive water drives nutrients and chemicals down from the root zone, denying crops the nourishment and protection they need. The results are increased costs for chemicals and irrigation, and lower yields. Once contaminated, groundwater is slow to cleanse itself, so any pollutants in it could be a threat to human and other animal safety for many years. In central Wisconsin, the two pollutants attracting public and government attention have been aldicarb and nitrates—two soluble and valuable agricultural chemicals.[58]

Exposure to these contaminants creates health hazards for all. Carol Panasewich, a writer in the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Office of Pesticide Programs, indicates the concern expressed about pesticides in groundwater:

> Unfortunately, the more we look, the more we find—detections of pesticide residues in ground water are increasing. To date, 16

> pesticides have been detected in ground water in 23 states as a result of normal agricultural use, as opposed to improper disposal, spills, or other accidents involving those pesticides.
>
> The agency is concerned because people may be unknowingly exposed to unduly high levels of pesticide residues by drinking water from contaminated wells. Almost half of the U.S. population obtains its drinking water from ground water rather than surface water. Further, the use of ground water is increasing faster than is the use of surface water.[59]

Natural Contamination

Runoff from irrigated farms also washes natural salts and minerals into the groundwater. Joseph Cotruvo of the EPA's Office of Drinking Water lists a few of the more likely inorganic contaminants found in such water:

> Nitrates are common in agricultural areas. Among the inorganic contaminants are localized deposits of arsenic or selenium and sources of radionuclides such as radium and radon gas from the ground. The presence or absence of inorganic ions such as calcium may be related to the risks of cardiovascular diseases associated with the degree of hardness of drinking water.[60]

In the spring of 1985, toxic levels of selenium, a natural element, were found in a farm drainage water collector at Kesterson Wildlife Refuge in central California: Irrigation water leached the selenium out of the soil and stored it at Kesterson. A brief overview of the problem is provided in an article from *The Sacramento Bee:*

> Irrigated agriculture, a benevolent giant that brought prosperity and inexpensive food to millions, is suddenly being seen by some as having grown like Frankenstein's monster into a perverted, destructive force.
>
> The potentially monstrous problem confronting farmers and society at large is what to do with irrigation water after it has left farm fields and become drain water, often contaminates with pesticides and other chemicals.
>
> The answer for growers in the west San Joaquin Valley had been to send it to the Kesterson National Wildlife Refuge, an out-of-the-way spot south and east of San Francisco that migrating birds on the Pacific Flyway from Canada to Mexico use as a stopover.
>
> But dumping drain water into the 5,900-acre refuge was questioned as much as a decade ago by scientists who said the refuge would be polluted and deadly to the wildlife that used it.[61]

There has been a steady buildup of contaminates throughout the San Joaquin Valley. The cost of cleanup of drainage wastes has been estimated at over $13 billion just for the San Joaquin Valley of California. It has been estimated that taking the 42,000 acres that use the Kesterson Refuge for drainage out of production will result in a loss of $100 million

to farmers and the local economy.[62] The true magnitude of this problem is yet to be determined. Millions of acres of farmland in California and nine other Western states may be threatened by toxic levels of selenium.[63]

Irrigation of semiarid lands also eventually degrades the land by causing the buildup of salts. These dissolved salts also create pollution problems. Ancient civilizations along the Nile, Tigris, and Euphrates rivers lost valuable farmland because inadequate drainage built up salts in the soil, resulting in unusable land. A similar phenomenon occurs in the contamination of the Colorado River.

> Dissolved salts and minerals are a major pollution problem for the Colorado River, and the United States has a treaty obligation to Mexico, where the river ends, to keep salinity at certain levels. Irrigated agriculture is both a cause and a victim of salinity in the Colorado and its tributaries. Too much irrigation washes salts from the soil and causes downstream farmers trouble when the salt levels exceed what their crops will tolerate.[64]

This salinization process is evident in other areas of the United States and poses a major threat to agriculture.

> As salinization spreads, the survival of agriculture in the Central and Imperial valleys, which supply slightly less than half of the nation's fruit, nuts, and vegetables and about one quarter of its cotton, could be at stake. In the past year, agricultural researchers have warned that as many as 1.5 million acres in the Central Valley—roughly a third of its irrigated farmland—could be knocked out of production by the year 2000. The statewide toll could be more than double that. Surveys by the U.S. Department of Agriculture reveal that 2.9 million of the state's 10.1 million irrigated acres show signs of salt damage. Salinization may now affect 25 percent of all irrigated acreage across the nation.[65]

Potential Solutions

Perhaps the most obvious solution to runoff of chemical and natural contaminants would be reduced reliance on irrigated water. There are at least a few policymakers who believe this might happen without government intervention. The Reagan administration has cut back construction of costly federal water projects that supply cheap water to farmers. Former Secretary of Agriculture John Block has indicated that heavily irrigated agriculture may be declining because of economic factors. It will be too costly to pump water from deep wells and there will be a trend away from low-priced water to subsidize agriculture.[66]

More efficient use of existing water supplies would also reduce the drain on this important resource. One prominent environmentalist has claimed that "the water conservation potential for our nation is so great

that there is no need to build more water supply reservoirs for the rest of this century."[67] The opportunity for significant water conservation efforts in the agricultural sector was recognized by the Trend Analysis Program, which explained: "Conservation is probably the most effective avenue to alleviating existing and future water shortages. Potential for savings exists in agricultural, municipal, and industrial use of ground and surface water. The greatest opportunities are in water for irrigation, since it comprises such a major component of use."[68] An example of such a conservation measure is the use of drip irrigation. Although costly, this method of subsurface watering has reduced water use and increased farm profits in Arizona. It is estimated that 500,000 acres in Arizona plus millions of acres in Texas, Florida, and California could profitably be converted to this process.[69]

The government could develop conservation regulations that would force, by law and enforcement efforts, a reduction in water use or a free-market approach could be developed. Government regulation is a common model for problem solving and its advantages and disadvantages are well documented. Another approach is to rely on market mechanisms. Most free-market proposals involve increasing the price of water:

> An analogy is often made with the unexpected extent of energy conservation caused by the leap in oil prices. A recent General Accounting Office report on water issues concludes that "water is too valuable to be given away or priced way below cost in today's or tomorrow's environment." Suggestions include creation of a "water market" that would allow farmers to sell water they do not need to the highest bidder as an incentive to eliminate waste, or the pricing of water closer to its cost through hikes in tax rates and water and sewer bills.[70]

Water is now priced below its real market value, a fact that is especially true of agricultural water. Farmers pay only a fraction of the cost from federal and state irrigation projects. The result is wasteful usage. An editorial in *The Sacramento Bee* argues:

> The underpriced waste sends a false signal to landowners, who plant crops and use farming methods inappropriate to the real cost of irrigating their fields. And it sends a false signal to policy-makers who get the idea that it's not economically necessary to look for better ways to provide water than by expanding the State Water Project.
>
> It's largely because state project water comes so cheap to rural customers—and federal irrigation water is even cheaper—that there is so little interest among them in establishing sensible, money-saving regional programs for conjunctive management of groundwater and other water resources.[71]

A higher price would be a powerful incentive to conserve water and, if the cost is high enough, to stimulate research and testing of alternative

methods for securing fresh water, such as desalination. Higher prices would also encourage technological development of new products. For example, new strains of wheat, corn, and other crops could be developed that require less water.

There are some problems that may require a combination of government and private efforts. For example, the preferred proposal to solve the drainage problems of water runoff is too expensive for individual farmers to afford without government assistance.

> The approach that both individual farmers and Westlands irrigation officials favor is to build a series of evaporation ponds covering a total of about fifteen percent of the poorly drained land in the district. Because of the selenium, these would have to be specially lined to meet state environmental regulations and could cost a total of $190,000 an acre to construct. Agricultural economists suggest that evaporation ponds are out of reach without subsidies of some sort. Says George Goldman of the University of California at Berkeley, "Farmers are going to have to get subsidies, maybe tax credits or write-offs. The question is, how much is it worth to keep the land in production?"[72]

Regardless of the approach taken, use of water resources is an important factor to be considered in any long-term agricultural policy decision.

Comprehensive Policy

Now is the time to initiate a comprehensive policy to cover the potential depletion and quality of agricultural water sources. Dr. Thomas Hellman, a professor of geography, concludes:

> We are fortunate that the supplies of ground-water in this country are vast. If we act now to apply our knowledge and skills in protecting this resource, we can assume the development of a sound ground-water management system resulting in a supply of water for all uses. Comprehensive groundwater management is necessary to protect public health and the environment while responsibly maintaining multiple uses of the resource. This type of an approach is needed to insure that we do not misuse our ground-water resource.[73]

Hellmen sees the need for a comprehensive federal, state, and local groundwater management plan. The present system is fragmented even within the federal government. An Office of Technological Assessment report noted that fourteen different agencies are responsible for programs and regulations of groundwater alone. As a result, OTA concludes "a large number of potentially toxic contaminants are not covered by any regulation, different sources are treated under different regulations and standards (even though they could contribute similar contaminants to groundwater), and a major portion of the drinking water from the resource lies outside any regulatory influence. Efforts to coor-

dinate federal policies, especially within the Environmental Protection Agency, are shown to be incomplete and inadequate."[74]

Coordination is especially necessary because much of the water in the Western states is owned by Native American tribes. *Editorial Research Reports*, in an article on American Indian Development, sets the parameter of this discussion:

> American Indian tribes in arid Western states own potentially large shares of the region's scarce and economically valuable water. Tribal governments, recognizing the wealth that water could bring, have been pressing lawsuits and negotiating with federal and state officials to firmly establish Indians' rights to water flowing through their reservations. But those claims, staked out by a 1980 U.S. Supreme Court decision, are putting tribes into conflict with Western farmers, industries, cities, and towns that in some areas already use all the water supplies available.[75]

In general, Native American water claims predate non-Native American water claims. The potential for conflict over scarce water has been realized in many instances. Rob Stern, Council of State Governments, notes:

> Major conflicts exist in over 60 water basins involving more than 100 Indian communities throughout the West. The outcomes will affect urban growth in Tuscon, Salt Lake City, Albuquerque, and Reno; energy developments in the San Juan, Power River and other resource basins; agriculture in Arizona, California, Nevada and Washington; and small ranchers and farmers all over the West. Whatever the decisions, they will have a major impact on Indian community economies.
>
> Major litigation is underway in at least 53 water disputes. Jurisdiction between states, tribes and the federal government is unclear. Management, water quality, proprietary rights and entitlement are all issue.[76]

Pesticides

American farmers make significant use of pesticides—2.3 billion pounds each year.[77] Farmers are very determined to maximize the crop yield from their land, and they may use pesticides even when usage poses a threat to public health.[78] There are strong arguments demonstrating that the present system has failed to adequately limit pesticide usage. The major legislation regulating pesticides is the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). This act is riddled with loopholes, and falls far short of other environmental laws. Nevertheless, despite years of critical analyses by impartial agencies, the law remains unchanged. One problem is that many pesticides have not been adequately tested. According to Nancy Drabble of Public Citizens Congress Watch,

> at least 84% of pesticides now in use have never been adequately tested to determine whether they cause cancer. In addition, 93% have not been tested for their capacity to cause genetic mutations, and 70% have not been screened as potential agents of birth defects.[79]

Although the FIFRA has required the EPA to "reregister" all pesticides that have not undergone health and safety tests since 1972, numerous extensions of the deadline have been granted. After thirteen years, the EPA has a complete data package on only 6 out of the 600 active ingredients used in pesticides. By the EPA's own admission, the reregistration process will not be done until after the year 2000.[80] Even when a pesticide is identified as dangerous, the cancellation process may take years. Although the National Cancer Institute identified the pesticide EDB as a carcinogen in 1974, it was not banned until 1984.

A further weakness in existing laws is the lack of effort in requiring appropriate use of pesticides by farmers. People who have been certified to apply pesticides may not even be required to be on-site when the pesticide is used. An additional problem lies in who actually enforces the laws. Ralph Lightstone of the California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation has definite ideas on this subject:

> Congress gave authority over pesticides to the EPA, which in many cases delegated enforcement back to state agricultural agencies. . . . The people in charge of promoting farming shouldn't be enforcing pesticide laws.[81]

Changes in the current law have been proposed. Environmentalists and the pesticide industry have reached a compromise agreement, greatly strengthening pesticide regulation. However, this proposed law is not part of the status quo. The farm community and the EPA have not given the agreement their blessing, and other issues remain to be debated before legislation will be final.[82]

Pesticide Harms

Pesticide residue on food that consumers purchase at the store can be very harmful. Some pesticides cause cancer, others are highly toxic. Residues accumulate in human tissues, and have a particularly harmful effect on children.[83] Pesticides have additional harmful consequences. For example, the pesticide aldicarb, one of the most toxic available, tainted over one million watermelons. Fourteen hundred people suffered from diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, and blurred vision as a result.[84] An estimated 45,000 people are poisoned by pesticides each year.[85] In addition to being exposed through food, other people are harmed through direct occupational exposure. Long-term exposure to low levels of pesticides puts farm workers at risk of tumors, reproductive disorders, birth defects, and cancer.[86]

New pesticides may pose an even greater threat to human health. For example, although pesticides such as malathion and parathion are less prevalent, they are more water soluble and thus more likely to reach aquatic and marine organisms. They are also more acutely toxic and pose a greater hazard to farm workers.[87] When EDB was banned, concern was expressed that its replacements, such as carbon tetrachloride, would cause cancer and genetic mutation.[88]

Integrated Pest Management

A major alternative to the wholesale application of pesticides is integrated pest management (IPM). Under this practice, a "systems" approach is used to stabilize pests at harmless levels, rather than a knee-jerk application of more and more pesticides in an attempt to eliminate pests. For example, IPM as practiced on the central Texas cotton crop involved use of short season cotton, elimination of second and third cuttings to end the growing season before the pink bollworm population could build up, and plowing under crop remnants to deny insects food and shelter. Harvested acres in the area were increased from 50,000 to over 236,000. Better postmanagement techniques could reduce pesticide usage by 50 to 75 percent.[89]

Presently, there is resistance to integrated pest management. IPM has lost out to a "magic bullet" philosophy, as a new generation of pesticides has been developed. Budget cuts by the Reagan administration have greatly hurt federal IPM efforts, even though IPM requires significant public support.[90] The solution, according to ecologist Michael Dover, is that

> we must also employ many different technologies, including biological controls, as part of a long term strategy. The key is to base the choice of technology on an understanding of how pests interact with one another and the environment. That will be possible only if we abandon our unsystematic efforts and set up a comprehensive federal and state research and advisory program to help farmers and others manage pests safely and efficiently.[91]

A major argument in favor of pesticide use is that it is needed to prevent substantial crop losses. However, the amount used is open to question. According to entomologist Robert Metcalf, farmers use twice as much pesticide as is needed, and still suffer a 20 percent crop loss to insects, just as in 1900.[92] A problem is that pesticides kill off natural enemies of crop predators, thereby eliminating nature's own check on pests. A further difficulty is that insects become more and more resistant to a given pesticide as the hardier insects survive and reproduce. More than 250 crop pests are resistant to some type of insecticide, including 20 of the worst pests, which are resistant to all types.[93] The chemical

industry can no longer develop new pesticides as quickly as pests develop immunity. Studies linking health consequences to pesticide use are not definitive. According to Larry Clark, Bernard Must, and Kenneth Portier of the Institute for Environmental Studies:

> The human carcinogenic risk from chlorinated hydrocarbon pesticide exposure is still indefined; toxicologic studies indicate a carcinogenic risk in animals, and low dose extrapolation curves from these studies suggest a small increase in life-time cancer risk for man.[94]

As animal studies are based on animal exposure to large doses of suspect substances, sometimes in ways that are different from the way that humans would come in contact with the substances, reliance on animal studies can be argued to be uncertain.

Epidemiological studies, based on human populations, are also not determinative. Direct links between individuals who died of cancer and individuals exposed to pesticides or involved in farming cannot be made. Thus, statistically significant associations between pesticides and cancer in an area do not necessarily prove an increased cancer risk among the population actually exposed.[96]

Tougher Regulations

There are many positive aspects of the recent agreement between the pesticide industry and a coalition of environmental, consumer, and labor groups. The agreement serves as an important first step towards new legislation. Under the agreement the following would occur:

- Strict deadlines would be set to force the EPA to review the chemicals that are active ingredients in pesticides.
- Pesticide manufacturers will pay a reregistration fee to help fund the review process.
- The EPA review process to cancel the use of a particular pesticide that may pose significant health or environmental hazards would be compressed to one year.
- Companies would have to provide more information to countries importing pesticides that are not approved for use in the United States.[97]

Voluntary agreements such as this can be argued to be superior to government-imposed requirements. John Todhunter, EPA assistant administrator for pesticides and toxic substances feels that

> voluntary agreements have many advantages both for industry and the public at large. Because the lengthy formal rulemaking process

> is avoided, test data is produced and evaluated more quickly. If warranted, action can begin sooner to protect public health.[98]

In addition, an open and mutually respectful dialog can produce more consensus than one which occurs in an adversarial relationship between the regulated industry and the regulator. Better and more rapid decisions derive from discussions between scientist and scientist than between lawyer and lawyer.

The Environmental Protection Agency's efforts can also be defended. At the level of structural inherency, the EPA must regulate the sale and use of pesticides in a manner that does not pose an unreasonable adverse effect on humans or the environment. The EPA's Office of Pesticide Programs has sped up its processing efforts and over 80 percent of most actions are completed well within the allotted processing time period. The EPA is working to improve the quality of its scientific assessments. One important distinction between the EPA's regulatory philosophy and that of a plan that takes more categorical action to limit pesticides is that the EPA will attempt to balance the needs of the agricultural community with the need to prevent unreasonable risk to humans and the environment.[100]

If integrated pest management is necessary, it can be argued that mandatory federal requirements are not needed. In many states, IPM technologies are available through county cooperative extension offices. For example, 70 percent of all orchards in California are utilizing IPM.[101] Successful efforts to increase IPM use may depend on educating growers regarding the mechanisms of crop development. If sound economic information about IPM's successes is given to farmers, they may be more willing to try this method.

Problems with Increased Regulation

Pesticides have their advantages. According to a staff report for the Department Operations, Research, and Foreign Agriculture Subcommittees of the House Agriculture Committee,

> pesticides are essential to modern agriculture and the maintenance of the nation's standard of living. They help conserve scarce resources from loss to natural pests, and increase the efficiencies of agriculture by raising the marketable portion of each acre of crops.[102]

The use of integrated pest management may have disadvantages. It is not always easy to find appropriate natural alternatives to chemical pesticides. According to *Science News:*

> On the average, it has taken the introduction of about 20 parasites of predators to find one that is successful for pest control.[103]

In addition, the benefits from IPM are long-term rewards, whereas a new generation of pesticides based on biotechnology offer lucrative

near-term payoffs.[104] Farmers on the brink of bankruptcy cannot afford to wait for long-term payoffs. Integrated pest management also increases government costs. IPM *requires an extensive, publicly* supported infrastructure in order to provide advisory services and field-level monitoring.

The argument that pesticides are counterproductive because they create resistant pests can also be countered. The resistance of insects may not be causally related to pesticides. According to Charles Sommers,

> although this dramatic rise in pest resistance seems to coincide with the use of pesticides, their usage may not necessarily be the cause. University of California entomologist George Georghiou says the development of insect resistance problems aren't necessarily man-made or due to our use of pesticides. . . . [T]hese life forms possess natural defense mechanisms developed over years of evolution which allow them to survive.[105]

Soil Erosion

Record use of America's cropland, in terms of both intensity of use and number of acres brought into production, have resulted in erosion of farmland. Erosion is particularly likely on the 20 million acres converted to cropland between 1975 and 1981, 19 percent of which is classified as highly erodible.[106] Soil scientists say that topsoil can be lost at rates no higher than five tons per acre per year (one or two tons on some soils) before damaging the long-term capability to grow crops. Studies conducted by the Soil Conservation Service show that more than a third of American cropland is eroding at rates higher than these tolerance levels.[107] One major harm is the loss of agricultural productivity. The Department of Agriculture estimates that potential yields of corn and soybeans could be reduced by as much as 30 percent if present rates of erosion are allowed to continue through 2030.[108] According to Congressman Arlan Strangeland, "We still haven't come to grips with the issue (of erosion). . . . the roots of a world food crisis are already present."[109]

Another problem is the deterioration of water quality. Many studies document the damage that sediment, nutrients, and other erosion-related pollutants cause in streams, lakes, reservoirs, and estuaries. Agricultural runoff chronically affects fish in 30 percent of the nation's waters.[110] Agricultural nonpoint pollution is largely responsible for the "fishable and swimmable" goals of the Clean Water Act not being met in many areas. Overall, agricultural pollution drains billions of dollars from America's taxpayers because the cleanup and restoration of waters afflicted with nonpoint source pollution is very expensive.[111]

Problems with Control of Erosion

Economic incentives work against voluntary soil conservation. The short run costs are too high and the payoffs too remote for a farmer to forego present profits in favor of conservation. Farmers already squeezed by rising costs will use their land as intensely as possible. Economic incentives also encourage planting of row crops, such as soybeans or corn, rather than using fields as pastureland for cattle or alfalfa. The former are the worst of the Corn Belt's crops from an erosion-control standpoint.[112]

Government programs may not be sufficient to solve the problem. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has conflicting goals—production and conservation.[113] This makes pursuit of conservation goals more difficult. New federal legislation has been passed in an attempt to reduce further soil loss. However, sodbuster bills allow an operator of erodible land to continue to benefit from federal agricultural programs if the land was cropped between 1973 and 1984. In addition, the definition of "highly erodible land" has been covered and the term of compliance is not until 1995.[114] The current federal tax code exacerbates the problem by giving tax breaks and shelters that subsidize cultivation of marginal lands.[115] Few states have opted to regulate severe erosion problems and local programs have very lenient enforcement.

Conservation Proposals

It has been argued that a mandatory program is essential to ensure full compliance on erosion control.[116] A comprehensive soil conservation policy must include changes in tax policy. Otherwise, government efforts to curb soil erosion will be at cross-purposes with a tax system that encourages just the reverse. Several farming systems that reduce erosion exist—no-till, minimum tillage, and conservation tillage. All involve ground preparations that require mild soil disturbance, if any. They do not use the mold board plow, which has traditionally been used for over two centuries to lift and turn over six to ten inches of topsoil.[117] Such techniques "seem to be the best hope of solving an erosion problem that conservationists see as an impending national disaster."[118] Zero tillage enables farmers to cut erosion by more than 90 percent.

Present Efforts

It can be argued, however, that the land being placed into agricultural production is not highly erodible. Only 2.1 to 2.3 million acres that were highly erodible were converted to cropland between 1979 and 1981—amounting to less than one half of one percent of all U.S. cropland.[119]

Potential crop shortages may also be overstated. Continuation of present rates of erosion would reduce crop yields by not more than 10 percent over 100 years, according to soil scientists at the University of Minnesota.[120] A reduction in erosion may also be irrelevant to water quality benefits. A reduction in erosion from land does not necessarily reduce the amount of sediment delivered to the nation's waterways, as soil eroded from streambanks and beds may simply replace that formerly delivered from the land.

Voluntary efforts by farmers to adopt conservation tillage can be defended. Many people have predicted significant implementation of conservation tillage by the year 2000—between 60 and 100 percent of all U.S. cropland.[121] In addition, recent federal legislation can be claimed to improve erosion control efforts substantially. A conservation reserve is established that will lead to the voluntary retirement of at least 40 million acres of some of our most erodible cropland.[122] Furthermore, a "sod buster" program has been established. The only way farmers on high erodible lands can qualify for federal farm program benefits is if they follow a soil conservation plan that has been approved by the local soil conservation district. The availability of farm program benefits often makes a difference between profitable and unprofitable operation of highly erodible farmland.[123] Thus, this policy will discourage farming operations on marginal lands.

Disadvantages of a Federal Approval

Many people agree that a federal program is not the solution to soil control. According to Roberta Savage in the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation,*

> a natural regulatory plan is an extreme measure favored by virtually no one. National legislation requiring the best management practice implementation on agricultural land would be difficult to administer and enforce. Moreover, it would break the spirit of cooperation needed to solve nonpoint-source pollution problems.[124]

A uniform federal approach could not address the different problems of each farm. According to Professor Theodore Schultz from the University of Chicago,

> clearly soil erosion is location specific. Its technical and economic attributes vary widely both within and between locations. For the purpose at hand, the unit of land on which erosion occurs is a farm, and the decision entity is the farmer. This being the case, a nationally administered program of soil conservation that is designed to provide funds and services to all parts of agriculture is bound to be a motel of inefficiency.[125]

Conservation tillage has its disadvantages. According to a survey of farmers, the major obstacles to adoption of conservation tillage were

weeds, insects, and diseases. Pest control, including cultural and chemical methods, can consume 10 to 30 percent of total farm operating costs.[126] *Traditional plowing kills weeds effectively by burying them*—with zero tillage, farmers must use special herbicides. The environmental consequences can also be counterproductive, as the use of additional herbicides to control weeds can lead to pollution of groundwater supplies, and the method can be used as an excuse to plant crops on hilly and erodible land better kept out of production.[127]

Preserving Farmland

Owners of prime agricultural land on the fringe of urban areas are increasingly selling their land. Such farmland is sprouting shopping centers, landfills, subdivisions, and other nonfarm development at a rate of 1 million acres per year.[128] Economic factors occasioned by the rising demand of commercial and residential developers, as well as speculators, gives farmers much to gain by selling their land. The potential loss to American agriculture is significant. The very places where land is being lost are among America's best farmlands in the Corn Belt and Southern states. Development in the country's 100 best agricultural counties is twice the national rate.[129]

In the area of specialty crops, the loss of farmland can be particularly harmful. Professors Southerland and Nieman have addressed this problem.

> [L]and availability for high-value specialty crops is becoming a greater problem. Specialty-crop agriculture often requires unique environmental conditions and proximity to supporting agricultural services. In many cases such lands are located directly in the path of expanding urban areas.[130]

In the future, other major crops will also be imperiled. Neil Sampson of the National Association of Conservation Districts states:

> Every nonfarm claimant on cropland—urbanization, energy production, transportation—is certain to be greater during the last quarter of this century. . . . Despite some disagreement among researchers as to the acreage of agricultural land that is being converted to other uses, there is a consensus that it is more than the nation can afford, at least in the long run.[131]

David Berry, a senior analyst with ABT Associates, has projected that "[i]f we consider losses to urbanization, there will probably be a cropland deficit in 20 years."[132] In addition to the direct harms to agriculture, debaters should be aware that the harms from increasing urban sprawl, such as the increased energy demands, the greater need for more infrastructure construction, and the escalation of air and water pollution, could also be claimed as significant by teams running cases to preserve agricultural land near urban areas.

Proposals

There are several options available for remedying current problems. Marcia Taylor and Darrell Smith discussed one such option in *Farm Journal:*

> The only foolproof way to preserve farmland is to buy or transfer development rights, some experts say. This is the process where a landowner sells the right to develop his property to a government agency. . . The value of the development right is the difference between the land's market value and agricultural value.[133]

Federal policies that encourage farmland conversion could also be changed. Federally assisted projects could be curtailed when their effect is to encourage farmland development. Water resource development, sewage treatment facilities, and other public works often use farmland or stimulate development that occurs on farmland. Federal tax and energy development policies also interfere with farmland protection needs.[134]

An argument can be made that a loss of agricultural land is not harmful. On the assumption that the stagnant food export demand evidenced since 1981 continues, "the increasing demand for land for crop production [is declining, and] the increasing demands for the land for urban and other non-agricultural use (probably not more than 750,000 acres per year out of a current and potential cropland base of 540 million acres) could easily be accommodated."[135] More productive use of cropland not converted can also be made. The history of American agriculture shows that the pace of technological change can be affected by investing in research in the agricultural sciences and in new technology. According to Pierre Crosson, "the new technology option is a far more promising response to any prospective scarcity of agricultural land than slowing conversion to non-agricultural uses."[136] Clifton Lutrell observed, "There is much acreage (such as grazing, range, or forest land) that is not currently being used for cropland. It could be converted to crop production within a short period of time if relative prices made it profitable to do so."[137]

A Federal Policy

The present system is making an effort to preserve farmland. Many state and local governments have used tax incentives, zoning restrictions, or even the purchase of development rights to keep land agricultural. All but two states now offer property tax relief by taxing farmland on its agricultural value rather than its market price.[138] At the federal level, the Farmland Protection Policy Act has been passed, and it directs all federal agencies to minimize development on cropland.

There also may be problems with efforts by the *federal* government to preserve farmland. The federal government is too remote from local situations and perspectives to exert strict controls that could be fair, constructive, and reasonable.[139] Most agricultural economists think that the loss of prime farmland is not a national problem, and that "there is no evidence that it [problems with declines in farmland] could be solved more efficiently by social planning than by market participants."[140]

Purchase of development rights may not be an economically feasible solution. Because the land not converted has much greater value in nonagriculture than in agriculture, locking enough of it into agriculture to make a difference would be very expensive.

Migrant Farm Workers

Migrant farm workers move from farm to farm harvesting crops, rather than living in one place and working the land there. It is estimated that there are 2.7 million migrant farm workers in the U.S.[141] working in all fifty states.[142] Some are Americans, who are often young, black, and unable to find any other job. Others are illegal aliens or transients recruited from skid row. In addition to working long hard hours in the field, migrants face a variety of problems.

The health and nutrition of many migrants is poor. According to nutrionist Mary Guiney,

> [m]igrants' diets are frequently deficient in calcium and vitamins A and C, and they are too high in sugar and starch. Half of all the migrant children seen at the Granada clinic are anemic. Forty percent are overweight. Diabetes and hypertension are common among adults.[143]

Housing conditions are too often atrocious. Families are often squeezed into one-room cubicles where they sleep on filthy mattresses. Basic plumbing facilities are frequently lacking. Unfortunately, migrant workers do not make enough money to afford better. Thus, it is not surprising that tuberculosis, which has largely been eliminated in most of American society, persists among migrants.[144] The net result is a low life expectancy. Congressman Mickey Leland reports:

> Low and unstable income, hazardous working conditions, unsanitary living conditions, the transient nature of their lives, and limited health and social services have led to high infant mortality rates and a lower life expectancy among migrant farmworkers. . . . The latest available health data for migrant farmworkers notes an infant mortality rate that is two and one half times the national average. Life expectancy for migrants in 1976 was reported to be 49 years—23 years below the national average.[145]

For the children of these workers to break out of their cycle of poverty, a good education is needed. Unfortunately, this is often difficult to obtain. English may be their second language, the mobile nature of the labor force makes it difficult to stay in one place, the drop-out rate is high, and the migrant students are often expected to do farm labor.[146] Despite the strong educational need, funds for education of migrant children are a low priority with the administration, taking a disproportionate share of Department of Education cutbacks.[147]

Exploited Workers

The employers of migrant workers exacerbate the plight of these people. Most migrants do not work directly for the farmer; instead, they are hired by a crew leader who provides their labor to growers for a fee. Crew leaders deduct money from the migrants wages to cover the cost of food and housing, and they often cheat workers out of their earnings by deducting excessive amounts given the nature of food and housing provided.[148] Crew leaders sometimes underreport the number of hours that the crews work, thus avoiding minimum wage laws. Workers can end up held in de facto servitude by unscrupulous crew leaders, who can claim that after deducting the cost of room, board, liquor, and cigarettes from the workers' wages, the workers actually owe them money. The worker is then "made acutely aware through the use of force and threats that he or she may not leave the labor camp until the debt to the crewleader is paid."[149] According to legal services attorney Steve Edelstein, "in North Carolina alone, the number of workers forced into farm labor conservatively is in the high hundreds, going to the low thousands."[150]

Failure of Status Quo

Migrants are not a politically powerful constituency. Chances for new reforms are slim, given that agribusiness is one of America's most powerful interest groups. Stephen Nagler, head of Migrant Legal Services, accurately sums up the political situation of the migrant workers:

> migrants, few of whom can vote, have zero political pull. You put them up against big business and it's no contest. I'd say prospects of winning them a decent life, free of exploitation, are bleak in the present climate.[151]

Enforcement of existing laws is also weak. Budget cuts have greatly reduced efforts to enforce federal laws, and it is estimated that the Labor Department can get to only 10 or 15 percent of the cases before they are three or four years old—at which time the witnesses are long gone. Exploited workers are not in a position to insist on their rights. As lawyer Billie Ellerbe states:

> They [migrants] are naturals for the rankest kind of exploitation. . . . If you're a Haitian hiding from the law, are you going to advertise your presence? And if you're a wino needing a drink, would you jeopardize your supply by protesting?[152]

Intimidation by crew leaders worsens the problem. The North Carolina chapter of the National Lawyers Guild reported that only 1 percent to 33.3 percent of the cases of violence against farm workers are ever reported. Workers fear for their lives against labor contractors, who post armed guards outside of bunkhouses. Local officials often perceive the workers to be bums, drunks, or drug addicts and therefore feel little compassion for them. Some police even return "wandering" farm workers to the nearest labor camp.[153]

Proposed Changes

An advisory committee in Virginia came up with the following set of recommendations. These recommendations, whichcould form the basis for an affirmative plan on the federal level, were:

- Provide funds, grants, or loans to farmers to improve migrant labor housing.
- Enforce health, safety, and wage standards more strictly.
- Coordinate regulations governing migrant workers and untangle conflicting state laws.
- Improve coordination among social service agencies providing food stamps, medical care, and education, so that workers are not victimized by red tape.[154]

Any such plan will also have to come up with more money to expand enforcement efforts and recruit motivated people who want to help migrant workers improve their quality of life. Workers should be allowed to make complaints against crew leaders without fear of deportation, and they will need to be better protected from such crew leader reprisals when they report violations.

Current Programs

A wide variety of programs exist that serve the needs of migrants. Increased funding of them may be sufficient to alleviate the need for a new federal program. The Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children, known as WIC, has been established for migrant farm workers in Colorado and expanded to other states with large migrant populations.[155] The program provides special foods to low-income pregnant and lactating women, as well as children up to

age five who are at nutritional risk. In addition, medical evaluations and health care services are provided. The program is integrated with other health services, and nutritionists, nurses, and dental hygienists travel to migrant centers. Other sources of health care are also available. Congress has appropriated $167 million over three years for health centers serving migrant workers.[156] In addition, federal law allows state education agencies to provide health, nutritional, social, or other support services to eligible school-aged migrant children.

Education programs are also available. Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 authorizes payments to state education agencies for assistance in educating migrant agricultural workers' children, and Congress has provided the necessary funds.[157] The state programs must be designed to meet the special needs of migrating children, and the program is now an interstate network involving over 600,000 children each year. Grant monies are also used for interstate coordination of migrant programs, including the transmittal of school records.

Laws to improve the lives of the workers themselves also exist. Such laws are already on the books to regulate crew leaders, mandate the minimum wage for farm workers, and provide legal aid.[158] Congress passed legislation allowing migrants to sue for damages if their employers fail to provide safe housing, transportation, or itemized information about their pay and withheld taxes.[159] State efforts to protect migrants also exist. For example, Texas recently passed legislation granting all migrant farm workers and seasonal agricultural laborers insurance coverage if they are hurt on the job.[160]

Not all employers are exploitative and heartless. According to Senator Wilson, the vast majority of agricultural employers deal fairly with their employees.[161] And, as mentioned previously, laws exist to regulate those who are unfair. Since 1876, peonage—the holding of debtors by creditors in forced service to them—has been outlawed. The Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Justice Department is stepping up enforcement of this law. Four people have been convicted for conspiracy to hold farm workers in involuntary servitude and twenty-eight other slavery investigations are being pursued.[162]

Potential Disadvantages

Laws to protect migrant workers may look good on paper, but effective enforcement is very difficult. According to U.S. attorney Robert Merkle, "the problems confronting enforcement are staggering. . . . People held in these conditions [de facto slavery] are physically and psychologically coerced. They are reluctant, unwilling witnesses. They live in a constant position of intimidation."[163] Provision of social services is

complicated by migrants' transient lifestyle. Workers may be unable to return for follow-up visits to provide testing, monitoring, or counseling.

Improvements in migrants' living conditions will also require money. This money will either come from the federal government, which already faces severe budgetary constraints, or from the farmers. Farmers with economic problems of their own will have a difficult time paying for improvements of migrants' living conditions. In some poverty-stricken counties, local housing may be no better than the migrants' housing.[164] For many growers, the price they set for their crops is too low for them to make the needed improvements.[165]

Farm Mechanization

Farm mechanization is significantly increasing. Mechanical harvesters have replaced field workers in picking processing and fresh market tomatoes, wine grapes, and canning peaches.[166] According to attorneys for California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA), commercial mechanization replaces workers with machines, "thus directly threatening the jobs, livelihood, and well being of hundreds of thousands of [California's] most vulnerable workers."[167] The mechanical tomato harvester alone reduced the peak number of tomato harvest jobs from 50,000 in 1963 to 18,000 in 1970.[168] Displacing workers and putting them on welfare is not desirable for society.

Other harms are also associated with mechanization. Machines require a large acreage to spread their substantial fixed cost over. Large farms can then take advantage of the cheaper unit costs mechanization provides, lower their prices, and force small farmers out of business.[169] The decrease in processing tomato farms and corresponding increase in average acreage planted between 1963 to 1973 is cited as evidence for this theory. The mechanical harvester is also held responsible for the pale, bland, and tough-skinned tomatoes sold in the store.[170] In addition, the CRLA argues that mechanization concentrates agricultural production and ends up raising prices to consumers. The significantly higher price increase for processed tomatoes when compared with hand-picked strawberries is cited as evidence for this argument.

A major cause of this increased mechanization has been research, particularly by agricultural scientists at the University of California.[171] The university began doing such research at the request of growers and processors after the Bracero Program was terminated in 1965. They wanted a replacement for the large, unorganized force of Mexican workers.[172] An affirmative team could argue that taxpayer-supported research should be done for the benefit of society as a whole rather than just agribusiness. One proposal is that the social costs of mechanization,

such as unemployment, should be balanced before research projects are undertaken. It has also been argued that agribusiness should pay for all research-related expenses.[173]

Federal Solutions

It can be contended that mechanization does not lead to unemployment. There are several reasons for this:

- Farming operations would move to other countries, as happened with asparagus, without mechanization.
- Expansion of acreage facilitated by mechanization creates jobs for irrigators, equipment operators, and cannery workers.
- By reducing stoop labor, workers will be physically able to work more years (few can do such labor for more than 15 years).
- Mechanization reduces farmers operating costs and reduces the desire to bring in foreign workers.[174]

In addition, farm workers' unions can negotiate to limit mechanization. For example, the United Farmworkers Union has negotiated anti-mechanization clauses in contracts.[175] Under current law, back pay can be provided to workers if the employer refuses to bargain in good faith over legitimate bargaining issues such as mechanization.

It is not clear that mechanization is the cause of the decline of small farms. Federal support payments, inflationary expectations, and farm credit programs all stimulated growth in farm size. The trend toward larger farms predated mechanization. From 1945 to 1964, the number of tomato farmers decreased by 63 percent in California and the average acreage in tomatoes per farm tripled.[176]

Many of the market problems attributed to increased mechanization can be disputed. Price increases are not necessarily attributable to mechanization. In the tomato industry, demand for tomatoes exploded as pizza and other products requiring tomatoes achieved popularity. Prices rose to reflect this increased demand.[177] The taste advantage to hand-picked tomatoes may also be false. The harvester is usually used on processing tomatoes, not fresh market tomatoes. If anything, mechanization may improve the nutritional quality of many commodities because machines permit the harvest to be done quickly when the commodity is at its peak quality.

The link between public-supported agricultural research and mechanization is not clear. Only 47.9 scientific human years of fruit and vegetable mechanization research were publicly funded in 1981.[178] In 1980, the secretary of agriculture announced that federal support of farm mechanization research was inappropriate.[179]

There are also disadvantages to a reduction in mechanization. The favorable agricultural balance of trade has been important in helping offset the cost of increased imports into the U.S. Highly mechanized U.S. crops are the most successful in international markets.[180] In accordance with the historical trend of mechanizing dangerous and undesirable jobs, mechanization of harvesting eliminates stooping and lifting, thereby adding to the length of workers' lives.

Tobacco

The federal government currently aids tobacco growers through a price support system. Ferrel Guillory of the *Raleigh News and Observer* described how the system works:

> [After farmers harvest tobacco], they take it to a warehouse where it is auctioned to buyers for domestic cigarette manufacturers and exporters. If no buyer bids more than a penny per pound above the federal support price, the tobacco is bought by a farmer's cooperative . . . with money borrowed from the federal government.[181]

Since the program's inception, the government has made $5 billion in loans to tobacco farmer cooperatives. This program operates to assure tobacco farmers a fixed minimum price for their crops. If tobacco demand rises relative to supply, and the market price of tobacco exceeds the support price, the cooperatives will earn the money needed to pay the loans back by selling the tobacco they have stored.[182] The tobacco price support system has come under criticism. Many legislators have argued that it is contradictory to discourage smoking because of its adverse health consequences and then turn around and help tobacco growers. "Why should the government support a product that the government itself proclaims is dangerous to your health?" asks Congressman Thomas Petri.[183] The existence of a price support system also encourages an unholy alliance between tobacco growers and cigarette manufacturers. There are many more growers and cigarette manufactuers than antismoking activists, so manufacturers gain a broader base of political support in their efforts to fight federal antismoking efforts. As a Tobacco Institute official notes, "the growers scratch our backs, and we scratch theirs."[184]

Problems with Tobacco Policy

Tobacco price supports may also be harming tobacco farmers. A high support price has made domestic tobacco more expensive than foreign tobacco, and manufacturers have substituted the foreign leaf for American.[185] U.S. tobacco exports are down significantly, and U.S. growers'

share of the domestic market has dropped to 85 percent.[186] This tobacco "subsidy" is also expensive. According to Congressman Thomas Petri,

> ending the tobacco subsidy would also save the government tens of millions of dollars a year. Administrative costs alone average about $15 million. While no one knows the full cost of the tobacco subsidy, the GAO recently estimated that the amount of money lost in just the uncollected interest over the life of the tobacco program cost the taxpayer over $591 million.[187]

The federal government also attempts to limit the supply of tobacco and prop up the price through an allotment system. Allotments numbering 545,000 have been issued, setting quotas that each farmer can grow. Less than half of all allotment-holders actually grow tobacco. Many of them earn money by leasing their allotments to other farmers.[188] This program has been said to create "a feudalistic system whereby tobacco farmers are required to pay extremely high rents to private investors for the right . . . to grow tobacco."[189]

Possible Reforms

Potential reform would get the government out of the business of supporting tobacco by abolishing price supports and the allotment system. Some debaters may wish to go even further and outlaw the growing of tobacco. Even though smoking is a deadly habit, federal price supports may be irrelevant to the amount of tobacco Americans support. Even if no tobacco was grown in the United States, tobacco can be brought in from overseas. Thirty-one percent of the tobacco in American-made cigarettes is already grown overseas.[190] Countries such as Brazil, Zimbabwe, and Malawi have created a glut of tobacco.[191] So long as the manufacture and smoking of cigarettes is legal, the cigarette manufacturers will obtain tobacco, one way or the other. Former HEW Secretary Joseph Califano noted that "not one person would quit or not start smoking if price supports didn't exist."[192] If anything, the subsidy made smoking more expensive by keeping tobacco prices high.

The subsidies may not impose substantial costs on the government. The tobacco farmers must now pay a fee so that the price support system operates at no net cost to the taxpayer. The growers must pay the cost of storing unsold tobacco, and farmers must pay the interest on the debt incurred by cooperatives that buy the tobacco. Price supports may no longer price American-grown tobacco out of the market. Under legislation recently signed by President Reagan, tobacco price levels will drop more into line with those of foreign competition.[193]

Potential Disadvantages

Although an elimination of federal price supports would probably not curtail smoking, it could have significant disadvantages. Tobacco is a

very lucrative cash crop. Compared with corn, which produces $300 per acre, tobacco is much more profitable, earning a $4000 return per acre if it is high quality.[194] Without the price system, the tobacco economy would be thrown into crisis. Most farm economists agree that one immediate effect of abolishing the program would be a sharp drop in prices, a ruinous prospect for many farmers.[195] Tobacco is one of the few crops that can still support a family farm—it would be much more difficult just to break even with other crops.

If tobacco were not grown in the U.S., unemployment could rise. Tobacco is a labor-intensive crop. Nationwide, it employs 103,000 farmers and provides 400,000 part-time jobs. Tobacco states depend on growing tobacco. In Kentucky, price supports prop up the state's $2.1 billion tax base and directly or indirectly account for more than 7 percent of its jobs. Kentucky's roads and schools would suffer grievously without price supports.[196] In an other example, tobacco contributed more than $1 billion to North Carolina's economy.[197]

Farm Health and Safety

There are many issues related to agriculture that affect human health and safety. This section will mainly discuss health and safety issues as they pertain to farmers and farm workers. But debaters should be aware that other health and safety issues exist, such as inspection of meat packing plants and treatment of food after it has been harvested and taken from the farm. Worker safety off the farm in places such as grain elevators could also be an issue.

Health Problems

Agriculture can be a very dangerous occupation. The National Farm Safety Council estimates that agricultural work accidents cause 1,700 deaths and 180,000 disabling injuries each year. The economic cost approaches $5 billion.[198] The risk of certain cancers is extremely high. For example, leukemia strikes Iowa farmers 24 percent more than it does the general population, and in Nebraska, the figure is 25 percent. In heavy corn-producing counties and counties with high insecticide use, the rate is increased by 44 percent or more.[199] Even basic sanitation may be lacking—more than one-third of the farm workers in the nation have no access to toilets, one-fifth have no hand-washing facilities, and more than half are not provided with drinking water.[200] This makes farm workers suffer infection and disease at rates comparable to those in rural areas of the third world—they are up to twenty-six times more likely to suffer parasitic diseases, eighty-five times more likely to suffer

from diarrhea, and five times more likely to develop skin rashes than the general population. The absence of sanitation facilities also affects the general public, as infected produce is eventually stocked in U.S. supermarkets.[201]

Proposed Changes

One reason for a lack of farm safety is that resources are not committed there. In Indiana, one person focuses on job safety for that state's 88,000 farms. Eleven people work with business on safety. Industry may employ 100 full-time safety experts, but farmers do not have those resources. In addition, farms are excluded from state and federal occupational safety and health laws unless ten or more workers are employed.[202] According to Professor Kelley Donham, "There are no comprehensive programs to deal with these issues. There are basically no federal agencies that look after the health programs in agriculture."[203]

An affirmative plan could impose new safety standards on farm equipment. It could place all farms under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration and mandate specific standards in areas such as sanitation and exposure to hazardous substances, such as pesticides. According to Donham, what is needed is "a national policy for the surveillance and prevention of health and safety problems in agriculture."[204]

Disadvantages of a Federal Policy

Many farm accidents may occur because of carelessness. Human error causes 85 to 90 percent of all farm accidents.[205] New safety standards on equipment or hazardous substances will not get at the root of this problem. Even when safety is mandated, farmer attitudes may work against its effectiveness. According to University of Nebraska Safety Specialist Rollin Schnieder, "You can design protective equipment, but if farmers don't use it, it won't help."[206] For example, master shields had been removed from half of the 578 tractors studied by the National Safety Council.

There is some question about whether a federal policy is called for in the area of farm safety. Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health Robert Rowland has said that state regulations already cover two-thirds of those who would be affected by a new sanitation law, for example.[207] Rowland also argued that farm health problems are not grave enough to merit federal action and have been "traditionally and properly left to the states."[208]

In addition, farmers may have a very difficult time complying with new safety requirements. Unlike industry, where one foreman oversees

one or two pieces of equipment year-round, farmers must work with time pressure in all types of weather, with all age groups, and with many types of equipment.[209] Due to financial problems, farmers often cannot afford to maintain their equipment properly.

Some farm hazards are not as important a priority for scarce federal enforcement resources as dangers in industry. According to Rowland,

> OSHA's resources are best utilized when OSHA sends inspectors to chemical plants and high hazard locations where there are frequent and documented threats to life and limb. Field sanitation, though an important public health concern, generally does not involve that kind of lethal and irreversible occupational hazard.[210]

A final potential disadvantage is that if farmers are forced to spend too much money making their farms safe for workers, they may opt to mechanize their operation, rather than hiring farm workers at all. This happened when organized labor won improvements in wages and working conditions in California.[211]

Budgetary Problems

Many of the reforms that affirmative plans will call for cost money. Improving housing for migrants, purchasing agricultural land to save it from urban sprawl, implementing integrated pest management, and enacting many other programs will all require substantial expenses. These expenses will either be paid by farmers or by the government. If farmers are expected to bear the cost, the expenses could be disadvantageous because many farmers are in trouble financially, as noted in chapter 2. If the government pays, other disadvantages could occur. This section will discuss the disadvantages of increased government spending.

Government Spending

Under the Gramm-Rudman Act, passed by Congress and signed by the president in late 1985, Congress and the president must agree on a budget that meets annual deficit-reduction targets, or spending will be automatically cut.[212] For example, on January 29, the president was required to submit a plan to trim $11.7 billion off the deficit by "sequestering" spending, half from defense, half from other programs, with Social Security and some low-income benefit programs exempt. Unless Congress comes up with its own plan, the president's plan automatically takes effect.[213] In October 1986, "a budget ax five times as large will fall unless Congress and the President agree on a budget that reduces red ink by nearly $60 billion."[214]

An affirmative plan that costs money will only add to the federal debt, and thus lead to further program cuts, unless taxes are increased to cover the added cost. The president is opposed to a tax increase.[215] Congress may also be afraid to raise taxes. According to economics correspondent Robert Kuttner,

> the Democrats think it is politically necessary to stand for a macho defense program and low taxes. Thus, they have no choice but to join Reagan in hacking away at the people programs they once championed. For if defense and taxes are sacrosanct, there is no remedy for the deficit other than wrecking what is left of civilian social spending.[216]

An affirmative plan may attempt to get around this problem by specifying some kind of tax increase or cutback in a program they feel they can defend as unnecessary. Questionable is whether an affirmative plan can specify a funding source without being extratopical, because funding is not part of "agricultural" policy. A program cut can also be circumvented by Congress. If Congress knows that a program will be cut by $5 billion because of the affirmative plan, it can just appropriate $5 billion more to that program than it had intended, and take the $5 billion from some other low-priority program. If an affirmative plan closes certain tax loopholes, Congress can pass different ones that benefit the same people and corporations.

A wide variety of programs will be in trouble when the budgetary provisions of Gramm-Rudman take effect. One is defense, which lost $5.9 billion under the first round of cutbacks. In 1987, that figure may increase to $30 billion.[217] Potential cuts could reach $65 billion in fiscal year 1987. That figure, according to House Armed Services Committee Chair Les Aspin, "could give us a defense budget that Jimmy Carter would assail as a threat to our national security."[218]

Social programs also face rough sledding under Gramm-Rudman. A projected $80 million cut at the Food and Drug Administration would force deep reductions in personnel and result in fewer inspections in the field.[219] About the time the agency got its first cut under Gramm-Rudman, it needed an immediate response to both the Tylenol poisonings and the reports of glass in baby food.[220] According to Senator Cranston, "there would be cuts in air controllers and air safety inspectors at a time when it is clear that it isn't safe to be flying," due to cuts at the Federal Aviation Administration. Medical care for the poor and elderly is also in trouble. According to Julie Kusterlitz,

> with its rigid, if still uncertain, cost cutting formulas, the deficit reduction plan could result in reduced quality or availability of health care for both groups . . .[221]

Affirmative Responses

Some kind of tax increase may be inevitable, if Congress and the president decide the consequences of Gramm-Rudman are too severe. Some budget strategists have predicted the president will change his mind, rather than allow cuts in the defense budget he worked so hard to build up.[222] The president's political leverage in Congress may not be sufficient to stave off a tax increase in any event—the blow the House dealt to his tax reform efforts suggests that his ability to control events on Capitol Hill has been badly eroded.[223] If a tax increase is desired, funding is available. A national sales levy, favored by Senate Republicans, or some kind of energy consumption tax as favored by many Democrats, could raise as much as $100 billion a year.[224]

There is also some question whether Gramm-Rudman will be fully effective in slashing spending. The law may be ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court on the ground that the automatic sequestration provision violates the separation of powers principle. The argument contends that the person in charge of the General Accounting Office can direct the execution of laws by the president even though he or she cannot be removed by the president without an act of Congress.[225] A U.S. District Court ruled that the new law did improperly give authority to the head of the GAO, and the Supreme Court is expected to rule on the case by July 4, 1986. Debaters should check the outcome of this case when preparing arguments for next year.

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